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JEAN TÊTEROL'S IDEA

FROM THE FRENCH OF
VICTOR CHERBULIEZ



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JEAN TÊTEROL'S IDEA

A NOVEL

FROM THE FRENCH OF

VICTOR CHERBULIEZ

AUTHOR OF "SAMUEL BROHL AND COMPANY," "META HOLDENIE," ETC.



NEW YORK
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1878.

JEAN TÊTEROL'S IDEA.

I.

LITTLE things are sometimes productive of great results. Some men's minds are so constructed that vulgar incidents, which hardly deserve mention, produce indelible impressions upon them, and are never forgotten. Fancying they have heard Heaven or the devil calling them, they set out at once whither their fate sends them.

On the 2d of September, 1833, about the middle of the morning, the Baron de Saligneux, dressed in a wadded dressing-gown of apple-green silk, left his study, with his hands in his pockets, to take a turn in his garden. The Baron de Saligneux, known by the name of Baron Adhémar for ten leagues around, possessed a fine château, which had descended to him from his ancestors, in the canton of Saligneux, on the borders of the Bugey and Bresse; and he also owned fields, vineyards, woods, meadows—in all, nearly five hundred acres of adjacent lands. He busied himself in managing his property, cultivating his land, overseeing everything; he never consulted any one but him-

self, and was more respected than loved by his dependents. The baron had the reputation of being severe, and rather difficult of access, but there was a way of approaching him with success ; it consisted only in bowing low before him and addressing him bare-headed. All his servants who adopted this method found that it answered well ; but there are stiff necks, and hard, haughty brows, to whom abasement is repugnant.

The baron had an assistant gardener, a youth of eighteen, named Jean Têterol, who had not understood how to win his favor, or had not wished to do so. This young man was a foundling ; he had been picked up on the highway, and had been called Têterol because it was thought that name could be deciphered on a paper sewed to his clothes. It was rumored that he owed his existence to a commercial traveler and the maid-servant at an inn. The servant had disappeared, and was never heard of afterward. The youth was fed and brought up by public charity, which, to tell the truth, did not do much for him. He was allowed to grow up as he would, and he might have turned out badly had not the young curé of Saligneux, who possessed all the virtues of an old curé, taken some interest in the child. He had him come to him, questioned him, and was struck by his wide-awake mind and lively intelligence. He decided to take charge of him, and taught him to read, write, and cipher. The Abbé Miraud was fond of gardening ; he gave Jean Têterol lessons in the art, and some years later he got him a place with the Baron de Saligneux, who only

consented to keep him in his service out of respect to the curé's recommendation. Jean Têterol's face did not please the baron, and his manners were not to his taste. He accused him of being reserved, absorbed in his own thoughts, taciturn, sly. "A person cannot tell," he said, "whether this fellow is his friend or his enemy ; or rather, he is neither the one nor the other ; he is an eternal stranger." He disliked him most of all because he had a head of iron and a stiff back. The baron demanded respect above all things, and Jean Têterol was not born respectful. He had come into the world with the idea that a baron of ancient descent and a foundling are on the same level, and made of the same clay. Who had put it into his head ? Was it the commercial traveler or the servant of the inn ?

Baron Adhémar de Saligneux, clad in an apple-green dressing-gown, with his hands in his pockets, was strolling in his garden, when he perceived Jean Têterol engaged in pruning a pear-tree. The antipathy with which the foundling inspired him had increased day by day. For some time he had been watching him incessantly, in the hope of finding him at fault ; but it was not easy to find Jean Têterol at fault. The taciturn fellow, who toward the end of his career became almost garrulous, was an indefatigable worker, sleeping little, rising early, diligent, conscientious. Goethe says : "For mediocre minds a trade will always be a trade, but for fine minds it is an art ; and the truly distinguished man does everything when he does one thing ; or rather, he sees in that one thing,

if well done, the symbol of everything in the world which is well done." Jean Têterol did whatever he did well, not that he was anxious to please his employers and win their praise, but because he had a great desire to please Jean Têterol, who was not easily satisfied with himself.

The baron approached Jean, and watched him work for a few moments ; then, frowning, accused him of not knowing how to do it.

"You are crippling my pear-tree," he exclaimed. "Drop that villainous pruning-knife, and go get me the shears. I will teach you your business."

Jean replied quietly that he understood his business, and that in some cases a pruning-knife was better than the shears. Perhaps he was right, for pruning-knives are not to be despised ; but when a man is a baron, and in the wrong, he gets angry, and that is just what happened to the Baron Adhémar de Saligneux. He rebuked the foundling in strong terms, called him insolent and proud, and told him that there is nothing in the world more amusing than pride which has been picked up under a hedge.

At first Jean listened to him without answering ; but, his patience being soon exhausted, he began humming the air of "Malbrough." It was the only song he had learned, and he liked to sing it ; unfortunately he had an unmusical voice, and, as he was very much in earnest in all he did, he sang false methodically, and enjoyed it. On this occasion his voice did not shock the baron so much as his insolence. Boiling with wrath, he lifted his hand against

the young man. The latter sprang aside, and succeeded in avoiding the blow ; but he could not prevent the baron from using his foot as briskly as his hand. The foot struck him in the small of the back, and sent him flying against the pear-tree. When he had recovered his equilibrium, he turned around, picked up his cap, which had fallen to the ground, and gazed at the baron with terrible eyes, from which streamed tears of rage ; then he suddenly ran off at the top of his speed, and disappeared.

Jean Têterol no longer knew where he was. He looked at the world through the medium of his adventure, and the world seemed quite changed. The sun, the fields, the woods, the steeple of Saligneux, wore a different air from the one he had always known. The fields, the steeple, and the sun, had seen the kick, and each was making its own remarks on the occurrence. He hid his shame in the depths of an impenetrable thicket, where he remained for two hours in meditation. He reviewed thoughts and resolutions each more extravagant than the last. The first was to set fire to the château ; the second was to lie in wait for the Baron de Saligneux at a turn of the road, and break his neck. He cut a holly club and examined it with pleasure. But his passion gradually calmed down. He believed in but few things, but he did believe in the tribunals and the gendarmes, and had decided never to have anything to do with them. He said to his stick, "No, that will not do ; I will find something better ;" and he decided that this club, which fitted his hand so well, should not serve

for a bludgeon, but should be his companion. Then he fixed his gaze on an old oak which was looking at him, and took it to witness that some day Jean Têterol would teach the Baron de Saligneux how to behave. He pronounced this oath in a vibrating voice, and the oak seemed to be touched by it. All strong men begin by an oath, like Hannibal.

He reëntered the château furtively, gathered up his clothes and papers, and made a bundle of them. Then he broke open the box in which he kept his money—he was very saving—and, having counted his gains, he was proud of the result. Then he departed, to return no more. On arriving at the gate, he took off his shoes tipped with iron, and beat them together, to shake off every particle of dust which they might have collected from the Baron de Saligneux's land. He employed the rest of the day in acquiring information, and in procuring a knapsack, in which he packed his clothes, and a leather purse to hold his money. He passed the night in the open air, under a bush, by the side of a ditch. He slept deliciously, and awoke refreshed and active, feeling capable of braving cold, hunger, thirst, and all the trials which might be in store for him. The Abbé Miraud was leaving his church after saying mass, when he saw Jean Têterol approaching, with his knapsack on his back and his holly stick in his hand. "Well, what is the matter?" he exclaimed. "What does this outfit mean?" Jean made no reply. "Jean, this is not right," continued the curé. "I know that you have had a scene with M. de Saligneux."

"Do you know," exclaimed Jean, "that he raised his hand and foot against me, and called me a foundling? I did not feel his hand on my face, but I felt his foot here; and I still feel it, and I shall always feel it, and what he said will always remain here," he added, touching his ear with his finger.

"M. de Saligneux is rather hasty," replied the good curé, "but you took his remonstrances in bad part; you were insolent."

"Let him meddle with what concerns him. It is not he who can teach me to prune a pear-tree."

"He can teach you to be civil. You must be respectful to your superiors, my boy. Oh, shame! while he was speaking to you, you presumed to hum the air of 'Malbrough!'"

"Excuse me, M. le Curé; I do not know any other," retorted the young man, with a grin.

The Abbé Miraud assumed a stern air. "Jean," said he, "either you will make your peace with the baron, or I shall cease to take an interest in you."

"Never!" said Jean.

"You know the Gospel commands us to forgive offenses? I admit that the baron was wholly in the wrong; forgive him."

"Never," repeated Jean, rubbing his back.

"Never is not a Christian word," replied the curé, sadly; "it is hardly a human word." And, as Jean remained silent, he added: "What do you intend to do?"

"Leave the country."

"And where are you going?"

"Ah! that is my secret; I have an idea of my own," said Jean, elevating his chin.

"You are very foolish," resumed the curé; "you are badly off with your idea! Ah, you have an idea! Does an idea support a man? does it warm him? does it fill his stomach? and does it prevent his dying of hunger?"

"All the same, I have my idea," said Jean.

"I fear it is an evil one. Ah! have a care; there are ideas which lead to the hospital; there are others which lead straight to the penitentiary." And, looking fixedly at him, the curé added: "I really think you have the devil in your eyes."

"God or the devil," he said, "it makes no difference to me. I believe in neither God nor the devil, M. le Curé! I promise you that I will be honest wherever I go; it is only fools who are not honest. And, moreover, if I ever have any inclination to steal, I will think of you—your old hat, your old threadbare cassock—and that will prevent my putting my hand in other people's pockets. But you must not ask me to believe in God or the devil. If there were a God, I should not have been found under a hedge; and, if there were a devil, he would have carried off the Baron de Saligneux and his cursed château long ago. But, as far as stealing is concerned, that is not my idea. M. le Curé, I promise never to steal."

"I am the humble servant of Seigneur Jean Têterol and his idea!" cried the curé; then, drawing two five-franc pièces from his pocket, he slipped them into

his hand. Jean hesitated about keeping them ; but he changed his mind, and said, " Thank you."

Thereupon he set out. The Abbé Miraud looked after him for a few moments, as he walked away, stirring up the dust of the highway, with his holly stick in his hand, his knapsack on his back, and his idea in his head. In truth, Jean Têterol's idea was still rather confused ; it was only in embryo, an approach to an idea. He had discovered that there were two kinds of men, the rich and the poor ; that the former were in a position to bestow kicks, and the latter in a position to receive them. He knew also with certainty that he had received one the day before, and that some day he would pay it back to the man who had given it. Yes, some day Jean Têterol would be rich, richer than the Baron de Saligneux, and he would take his revenge ; and then there would be something worth seeing. What would there be to see ? He did not know exactly, but those who had good eyes would surely see something. The point was to become rich. How ? He had promised the curé of his village not to steal ; he intended to become rich by work. He had noticed long ago that he could do more work in two hours than other men could in a day, and that his work was better done than theirs. What should his work be ? On this point he was equally in the dark, and waited for an inspiration. But he had heard that Paris is one of the places where great fortunes are made, and he made up his mind to go to Paris ; and to Paris he went, inquiring of passers-by the road to Paris, living on crusts and water,

sleeping on the straw or in the open air, singing the air of "Malbrough," and conversing with his idea, which answered him.

II.

JEAN TÊTEROL did not steal, and did not fail to become several times a millionaire—a complicated and difficult problem, which it is glorious to solve. Behold how, at the age of fifty-two, in confidential conversation with one of his friends, the notary Pointal, he summed up his history :

"On my arrival in Paris, with almost empty pockets, I made the acquaintance of some Limousins—good fellows. They took me to their workshops, where I passed the day, observing them cut stone and mix and temper plaster, questioning them, obtaining information about many things and divining the rest—trusting less to the word of others than to my two eyes, which I was never accustomed to carry in my pocket. My mind worked actively, and before I went to bed I had seen clearly that building was what would suit me.

"On the third day I went to work, and mixed the mortar. With my hod on my shoulder I climbed the ladders, which I liked to feel tremble under my feet, and under the weight of my hopes. From the scaffolding I looked down on the passers-by ; they seemed very small, because, apparently, they had not an idea.

There are men who have, and there are men who have not ; I had my own. The Abbé Miraud was wrong ; an idea does feed a man, and warm him in winter, and refresh him during the heat ; and it has eyes, mouth, and tongue ; it speaks, laughs, and is good company. Thanks to my idea I was never alone, either by night or day. When my stomach was empty I beheld again a château, a garden, a pear-tree, a baron ; and I felt as if I had eaten. I also saw a curé who slipped two shining coins into my hand. I have them still, those two coins ; here they are. It was a reserve fund which I was resolved never to touch ; it was also a fetich, which has brought me good luck. I fasted, I lived by labor and economy. I found the means to buy books, compasses : I studied geometry, mechanical drawing, alone, without assistance, without advice. Some one once told me that I had a genius for disentanglement, and eyes which saw clear in the night.

“From a laborer I became a mason, and I soon knew all that concerned my business. My comrades did not like me ; but they dared not say it, or look askance at me : there was something in my eyes which held them in awe. Do you know why they did not like me ? Because I never went to the wine-shop, and had a taste for inexplicable things. There is nothing in the world more useful than the things which seem to be good for nothing. But, out of a thousand masons, how many do you find who prefer a hard book to the wine-shop ? Only one, and sooner or later, with perseverance, that one makes his mark ;

the others remain in the lowest rank, and cry out against injustice, with their hands on their hips.

“If you have hands hardened to work, inured to fatigue, legs which are never tired, good sense, a head which is always at work, and a certain uneasiness of mind which seeks the best in everything, you will be observed, and you will not remain a simple workman long. When I had become a master mason and had men to govern, I felt myself in my proper position : that was what I was born for. They complained sometimes that I was not a gentle master. My ideas were so clear, my orders so precise, that good workmen obeyed me with pleasure : they do better with a brutal master who knows what he wants than with an easy master who does not know. A horse understands in an instant whether the man who mounts him knows how to manage him. It is disagreeable to him to feel an awkward rider on his back ; a good horseman guides him at will.

“The contractor who employed me, M. Corbil, was just the man I needed ; if I had invented him, I would not have had him otherwise. His disposition, his character, all served me to perfection. He had an enterprising taste, and more invention than judgment. Fools lose themselves in details, the indolent neglect them ; the man of talent looks at the whole case without despising minutiae. M. Corbil despised them, and commissioned me to attend to them in his place. Moreover, he was fond of amusement, and had his pleasures ; I had none, and it is not unlawful to profit by those of other people. One day he committed an

imprudence ; he embarked in a doubtful affair. I warned him ; he did not heed me. He afterward tried to drown himself ; I dragged him from the water by his hair. From that time forth he always listened to me, and I became as dear to him as the apple of his eye. I was his counsel, his oracle, his tool. Suddenly I made a show of leaving him ; in order to retain me, he conceded to me great advantages and a large share in his profits. I was no longer his tool ; I was his partner ; and that was the beginning of my fortune.

“At his death I succeeded to the business. I inspired confidence, and great credits were opened to me. After having built for others, I built on my own account. It was during the years of the great improvements. For a low price I purchased land in deserted quarters, which soon became thickly settled, and my fortune was made. It was said that I knew some tricks. My trick is to do well whatever I undertake. I knew how to build, to buy, to invest my money ; but I have never put even the tip of my finger into dangerous speculations, and I have never been seen on 'Change. It was also said that I was lucky. That may be ; but what helps luck is a habit of watching for opportunities, of having a patient but restless mind, of sacrificing one's ease or vanity, of uniting a love of detail to foresight, and of passing through hard times bravely whistling the air of 'Malbrough.'”

M. Téterol carried his history in his appearance. Small, thick-set, strongly built, always dressed in

coarse cloth, his millions had not taken away his rustic air. His strong head was solidly joined to his large shoulders ; his eyebrows were bushy. His steel-blue eye expressed intelligence and will, and became terrible when he was angry. The wrinkles on his brow, his manners, his walk, revealed a pride which, though neither arrogant nor pompous, was ungovernable, and said to the world, "Behold me !" It was enough to see this proud man cross the street ; he could be recognized as a man of small beginnings, who had elbowed his way ; a man of war and combat, who had won his battle. What was the amount of his fortune ? No one knew except himself. He had become communicative as he grew older ; he liked to talk of his business ; but, whatever he told, there was always something which he did not mention ; he united garrulity with mystery. If he had a payment to make, he never opened his desk until he had locked himself in and cast a glance under all the furniture, to make sure that he was quite alone. If he paid for any purchase in a shop, he turned to the wall as he drew out his purse, which he opened only a little way, so that the wall itself could not know what was within. When a man distrusts men, he ends by distrusting walls ; and M. Têterol distrusted everybody, even his dog, who, to tell the truth, had the deplorable habit of investigating drawers.

M. Têterol's reputation was spotless. He had never broken his word, never wronged any one to the extent of a sou ; he fulfilled his engagements with the greatest exactness. He prided himself on never hav-

ing lied, and he had a right to do so ; but he did not consider himself bound to inform other people of their mistakes, when their mistakes could be of service to him. He regarded life in the light of warfare, and considered the ruses of war permissible ; but he did not admit the propriety of their being employed against him, and he considered himself aggrieved when any one retaliated on him. On such occasions he felt a virtuous indignation, which was perfectly sincere and rather amusing. There was a good deal of *naïveté* in his character ; however crafty he was, he was much more candid than was generally supposed. When any misfortune happened to him, he expected everybody to sympathize with him ; but it was useless for any one to expect him to pity other people in their troubles ; that was not his way. He divided unlucky people into two classes : he consigned infirm people to the hospital, and fools to the madhouse. If not unjust, he was yet terribly close-fisted. His workmen never approached him without fear and trembling, knowing that he had no pity for embarrassed speech, for the man who hesitates for his idea or phrase ; and yet, when he was in a rage, it often happened that he could not utter his own idea in words. They were equally afraid of his insulting speeches, his sharp laugh, and his ferocious gayety. In the morning, before presenting themselves to him, they remained for a few moments with their hand on the latch, expecting to receive full in the face some rebuke or cruel pleasantry which he had thought out at his leisure during the night. This terrible man had an iron

constitution which could do without sleep, and in his sleepless moments he passed in review his affairs and his dependents, and busied himself in preparing something appropriate for each. So his sleepless nights were anathematized by the poor fellows who depended on him ; they dreaded above all things the ideas which occurred to him in bed, and he called them himself his pillow ideas.

Nevertheless, his actions were occasionally less hard than his words. When a poor wretch screwed up his courage sufficiently to make an appeal to his generosity, M. Téterol would exclaim, " Who will deliver me from snivelers ? Who permitted this chatterer to enter ? Is my house a mill ? Ah ! you have chosen your man well ! Have I the time to listen to you ? I have never asked anything of anybody ; I have always got on without assistance from any one, and all I ask is to be left in peace. You cannot pay your rent ? Then sleep out of doors : I have often slept there myself, and it did not kill me. You have no money for food ? When I climbed the ladders, I used to dine on raw onions. But hold your tongue ; do I care to pry into your affairs ? You are an idler who wants to live without work. Ah ! you have come to the wrong man ; I have a holy horror of weak arms, trembling lips, and feeble wills. I sweated for forty years ; do you sweat also, my man. I have toiled and drudged ; learn to toil and drudge also. I have made my way ; make yours. Ah ! yes, I will give you something—a piece of good advice. Would you like to know the maxim which has been the rule of my

life? Listen and believe: the man who has no wants becomes, sooner or later, the master of those who have wants."

At these words the man would make for the door, muttering between his teeth, "Old Crocodile!" But the crocodile would call to him in a brutal tone, "Wait!" and, turning toward the wall, he would cautiously open his purse a little way, but not until he had glared right and left, as if to protect his back, and would take out a crown, which he would throw in the poor laborer's face, saying "Get away quickly, or I shall run after you to take it back."

All crocodiles have one tender spot. M. Têterol, who had the reputation of loving no one, did nevertheless love one person, and this person was his son. He had married at the time when fortune began to smile upon him. Weary of eating at the restaurant, he wanted a housekeeper; and, above all, he wished to found a family. He married a little *bourgeoise*, who had a mind and heart above her station. He plucked this flower because it was within reach of his hand, but he never felt any curiosity to know its value or to inhale its perfume. His marriage did not consume much time; he went to the mayor's office, but flatly refused to go to church; he declared it beyond his strength; he did not like to enter churches. At the end of eighteen months he took a dislike to his wife, because she happened to appear one morning in an apple-green dress, which seemed to him to be the exact shade of the Baron de Saligneux's dressing-gown. After an interval of twenty years he thought he recognized the

dressing-gown, and it seemed to him that his wife had that day committed an irreparable fault. He called her Madame Gewgaw because she ornamented her hair with a knot of ribbon. As she was slender and delicate, she sometimes took the omnibus to return from the market, which was situated at a short distance, thus saving herself, at a cost of six sous, the fatigue of carrying her heavy basket. M. Têterol remarked *à propos* of this : "My wife commits every folly ; she has an oriental imagination." She had many kind thoughts, did many charitable deeds, and kept them secret, that she might not hear the words, "Your oriental imagination will end by ruining me." Her husband pained her above all by his distrust : he suspected her of trying to get his keys, and of plundering his drawers when his back was turned. She endured these affronts with angelic patience ; she found it simpler to die than to complain. Pascal has said that saints are never silent ; but there are, nevertheless, saints who say little, and virtues made of solitude and silence.

But if Mme. Têterol did love apple-green, if she ornamented her hair with bows of ribbon occasionally, if she took the omnibus to return from market, if she performed charitable works in secret, still she had one merit in M. Têterol's eyes, a solitary merit, which he recompensed from time to time by fugitive returns of tenderness : she had borne him a son. He called him Lionel, in honor of the Abbé Miraud, whose Christian name it was : the implacable memory of this priest-hater made an exception in favor of this wearer of

the cassock. His little Lionel won his heart at once ; he was the only living being who possessed the secret of soothing his brow, of cheering him, of rendering him almost amiable. He indulged him, and gratified all his whims ; he played with this doll without breaking it. When the child was seven years old he fell dangerously ill. M. Têterol summoned the first physicians of Paris to a consultation, and the child was saved. When he was about again, M. Têterol took care to add up in his presence the amount which his illness had cost, not omitting the apothecaries' bills. Every man has his own way of showing affection.

Lionel was fourteen when his mother died. His father placed him at the College of Henry IV. as a boarder. He had decided that his child should know everything of which he himself was ignorant—Latin, Greek, the art of pleasing, all the elegances of mind and manners. He wished to make a doctor of law of him, and later an ambassador, a minister, or a reigning prince. "It is I who have built the house," thought he, "and he shall be charged with the decoration. I have been the laborer, he shall be the man who makes the cornices and ornaments."

While waiting to become an ambassador or minister, Lionel was a very intelligent, very diligent student. He obtained the highest honors at the general examination, and his success tickled his father's pride deliciously, though he took good care not to show it. On the last day of every year he informed Lionel of the cost of his education, just as he had formerly rendered him an account of every cent which he had paid

the doctor on his account. He said to him : "You are lucky, my fine fellow ! All you had to do was to come into the world. What would become of you without me ?" And placing the delicate little hand of the young man by the side of his large, bony, hairy one, he added : "That is the hand which enjoys itself, this is the one which works ; that is the hand which receives, this the one which gives. Ah ! do not demand too much ; I have no intention of ruining myself for you." And looking at the handsome fellow with his graceful figure, and his abundant blonde hair, he thought, "The deuce, is he actually mine ?"

One day Lionel wrote to him from college, expressing his great desire to take riding lessons. M. Têterol replied by a curt note, worded as follows : "My good fellow, go a-foot." But he speedily changed his mind, and did whatever his good fellow wished. His son was his only luxury, and this parvenu, who had remained a peasant at heart, was delighted to have an heir who looked like a prince. He called him his Prince of Wales.

The Prince of Wales resembled his father in the firmness of his intelligence, in his will, and in his ambition ; but he inherited his generosity of mind and heart from his mother. When M. Têterol's workmen wished to obtain any favor from their master, they generally had recourse to the obliging intervention of Lionel, whom his father repulsed, saying, "Ah ! so you have the oriental imagination of your mother ?" He would also say, "Let me alone ; you bore me with your mysticism." M. Jean Têterol regarded all men

as mystics who believed in anything but their own interests, all who had a useless sentiment in their hearts, all who were capable of losing two minutes in looking at the clouds, or of feeling pity for an infirm person or a fool. But, in spite of all he could say or do, he could not change the Prince of Wales, who had been born a mystic.

If M. Jean Têterol had retained a certain rusticity in his manners, his heavy tread, his rather awkward gestures, resembling those of a peasant of Bresse or Bugey, he had also retained the simplicity and fixity of idea which distinguish the man of the village from the man of the city. The impressions of his early youth had left indelible traces in his brain ; he had a certain number of nails deeply buried in his head of granite ; it would have required a very skillful hand and famous pincers to extract them. He was, in truth, a peculiar and remarkable man. He had learned nothing except from himself. The pupil being worthy of the master, and the master of the pupil, he had acquired a mass of very complicated notions ; and, having reflected much on what happened to him, he had made himself a sort of philosophy of life which was of great service to him in his transactions. When not occupied with business, all his mental labor was reduced to a few confused sentiments, to a few sensations to which he continually returned. Everything else was to him a strange and distant country, an unknown land. He was accustomed to say : "It is Japan, and I shall not go there." We once knew an Alpine shepherd who became a great physician ; he

administered to his patients the skillful remedies invented by modern chemistry ; but he always cured himself when ill with simples gathered in the fields. M. Têterol gathered in the fields the simples which he reserved for his personal use. He reasoned by turns like a politician or a philosopher, or he had the feelings and imagination of an under-gardener of the Baron de Saligneux ; and sometimes he was all these at once. M. Pointal, the only real friend he had succeeded in making, said in speaking of him, "Scratch the millionaire, and you will find the wooden shoes."

M. Têterol had always regarded Paris as a temporary residence, as a station in life—a place where a man came to make a fortune, and which he was to leave when the fortune was made. He had amassed a fortune, and meditated departure. Thanks to his thick, impenetrable shell, he had remained absolutely insensible to all the pleasures, the seductions, the enchantments of the great city ; if it thought it had cast a spell upon him, it was very much mistaken. The boulevard was for Jean Têterol a place planted with artificial trees, peopled with cripples who tried to borrow other people's limbs, to contribute to their own success, and fools employed in amusing each other with buffoonery which had never succeeded in making him laugh. In a corner of the department of the Ain, where he was born, there was a village called Saligneux. This village was to him the centre of the world, the real capital of the universe ; the place to return to, to spend his income in, when he should have one ; the place to revenge himself ; the place to carry

out his idea. He shrugged his shoulders in pity when he thought of the Parisians to whom Paris is everything, and who know not Saligneux. It was very evident that such people had not a fixed idea ; it is certain that they had not his.

M. Têterol did not wish to wait until he was sixty before putting his great project into execution. At fifty-five he was marvelously vigorous—as young in mind as in body ; he had his arms, his legs, all his teeth. But his hair was turning gray ; it was a warning to him. He decided that he would set out during the first days of September, 1870 ; and he busied himself with regulating and settling his affairs. He was disturbed in his preparations by an incident which he had not foreseen, and this incident was Herr von Bismarck ; he had reckoned without that terrible host. When war was declared, he flew into a rage, and his first thought was that there had been a prearranged plan, a conspiracy, between the Emperor Napoleon III. and King William, to prevent Jean Têterol's return to Saligneux ; after which he had but one care, to deposit his heir, who had now entered on the first year of his law studies, in a safe place. He wanted to send him to England, but his heir refused to listen to this proposition, as he considered it his duty to fight for his country. The father and son had violent quarrels on this point.

"Your duty !" cried M. Têterol. "Eh ! parbleu—duty ! I know what that means. I have done mine all my life, and I beg you to understand that you can teach me nothing on that point. One must

be patriotic, and I am ready to die for my country. But all emperors are intractable animals ; nothing can be done with such people. For was I not to have gone to Saligneux this month ? Well ! let them demand money, and they will not fail to do it—you can believe me on that score : but I will not give them my Prince-of Wales. I made him for myself, and he is mine. I will put him in a trunk and send him to London as freight.”

Although the Prince of Wales was of a gentle, yielding character, although he carefully avoided every cause of quarrel with his father, and tried to be agreeable whenever they met, yet he did not allow himself to be put in a trunk nor treated as baggage. He managed so well that he succeeded in gaining time, and he was still in Paris when Paris was besieged. He enlisted in a marching battalion. M. Têterol wasted away with anxiety : he was by turns furious or in despair ; he wearied everybody about him with his complaints and recriminations ; he was out of conceit with the whole world, and included the entire universe, and even his dog, in his displeasure. The evening before a sortie, he said to Lionel : “I conjure you, be reasonable ; do not commit the folly of exposing yourself. Distrust your eternal mysticism—distrust your imagination ; it is a sorry gift from your mother. She was a good woman, I say nothing to the contrary, but she had no common-sense. Eh ! good God, if I were to lose you, it would be my death, and to whom should I leave my money ? I like Pointal very much, but not enough to give him

millions ; for, between us two, the question is of millions."

I do not know whether Lionel sought blows, but I can affirm that he did not avoid them. He was wounded at Montretout ; fortunately, his wound was slight, and M. Têterol did not find himself under the cruel necessity of leaving Pointal his millions. For forty-eight hours, in spite of all that could be said to him, he considered his son a dead man. As soon as he was reassured, he addressed the most vehement reproaches to him for what he called his incorrigible folly.

When Paris capitulated, M. Têterol experienced a transport of patriotic sorrow. He burst forth in maledictions against emperors and potentates. They would have had a sorry time if he had held them between his powerful hands ; with what pleasure he would have strangled them ! He wept with rage and shame, and the tears were real ; they could be seen rolling slowly down his cheeks. "Poor France !" he exclaimed. Suddenly he interrupted his lamentations to wipe his eyes ; his brow cleared ; his thick lips began to smile vaguely ; he seemed to be looking into space, at something which no one else could see ; and after a pause he said :

"Well, the good side of all this is, that I shall now be able to go to Saligneux."

III.

THOUGH impatient to go to the country, to devote himself to the worship of the sylvan god and the nymphs of the woods for the rest of his days, M. Têterol was detained in Paris for some months longer by accounts that needed settling, dull business, and debtors who alleged the hardness of the times and requested a delay. He did not finish what he called his great settlement, which had been retarded by various events, until autumn. One evening, about the middle of September, he invited M. Pointal to dinner. During the whole meal he had a grave and melancholy air, and assumed drooping attitudes ; he uttered deep sighs when speaking of his departure, for he never sighed so deeply as when he was perfectly happy. He begged the notary at least ten times to take great care of his son, to watch over him, to put him on his guard against every species of folly ; then he urged Lionel to endeavor without ceasing to become a man of note. In order to calm his mind, Lionel and M. Pointal promised to follow his instructions strictly.

After all had been said, he betook himself to the Lyons railway station, and, as he entered the carriage, he sighed once more : he was anxious that no one should suspect when he was pleased. Everybody, even a Têterol, has his atom of poetry. The morning was fine, and M. Têterol's mind was in festive attire. He felt the joy of a prisoner who has just been released ; the cheerfulness of the people of God when

they caught a glimpse of the promised land after having labored so long on the pyramids of the Pharaohs. What he felt could have been expressed in verse, but some one else would have been obliged to write the verses for him. He was not alone; his recollections accompanied him. They had never left him. In former times they had climbed the ladders with him, gnawed bones and plastered walls with him; with him they had traced diagrams, signed many a receipt, and made long calculations of compound interest of the most minute and skillful sort. At this moment they hummed in his ears like a swarm of flies, and told him tales. M. Têterol fancied he saw everywhere faces with which he was acquainted, both men and animals. The smallest accidents of the landscape, a hillock surmounted by a chapel, three large walnut-trees overhanging a pool, a bend in the road where there was a spring, the lines which defined the purple mountains on the horizon—he had carried it all away in his eye, and his prodigious memory had treasured it up. He stopped a moment to contemplate a field of buckwheat in flower, and bushes covered with wild mulberries; he said to them, “Yes, it is really I.” Then he walked on. He stirred up the dust of the road with his foot in delight, as he admired its whiteness; he fancied he found there the prints of his feet. He looked at his stick. “Was it yesterday or the day before, that you and I passed by here?” he asked it. “We were going to Paris with our clothes on our backs, and a knapsack held all our fortune—do you remember?” And his stick seemed to remember.

Suddenly he saw the pointed steeple of Saligneux rise before him, and its roof, covered with zinc, glittered in the sun. The steeple recognized him—the steeple saluted him ; and the cock which surmounted the vane fluttered his wings, opened his beak, and cried to all the department of the Ain, “Jean Têterol has returned !” Then Jean Têterol’s heart began to sing. For that one day he was a poet, a musician, what you will.

He met with one disappointment as he traversed the main street of the village with his heavy, methodical step. It was still, as formerly, a steep, narrow, tortuous, badly-paved street ; but to his chagrin he perceived a change. New houses had been erected, and on the public square a new schoolhouse had been built, opposite was a town-hall decorated with pilasters which seemed to him in the worst possible taste. He would have liked to find his Saligneux just as he had left it—everything in its place, the people awaiting him. He halted near a lavatory where three servant-maids in short skirts were beating their linen. He recognized the lavatory, but he did not recognize the servants, and he was angry with them in consequence. It seemed to him that they did it out of malice, that it was a trick they were playing on him. He was consoled when the cows passed, and he could fancy that they were the very ones he had formerly met in that spot. All cows look alike ; they all have in their eyes something fixed and eternal, a silent dream of fresh grass.

An anxiety seized him ; he began to wonder

whether the inhabitants of Saligneux, in their rage for innovation, had not taken a notion to procure a new curé, a curé with pilasters. That would not have suited his plans. He entered an inn to breakfast, and his first care was to inquire about the Abbé Miraud. Thank God, the Abbé Miraud was still alive; the landlord assured him of the fact, but at the same time informed him that the abbé was growing old, that he was very much broken.

"The idea! So robust a man."

"Bless me, he is seventy at least!"

"Seventy!" exclaimed M. Têterol. "People do not know how to preserve themselves in this country."

"What a pity!" retorted the landlord, who prided himself on being strong-minded. "When he is dead, another will come, and they are all alike. Moreover, everybody must die some time. We shall also die, shall we not?"

"We shall die—we shall die! What the devil do you mean? Speak for yourself," replied M. Têterol, hastily, looking askance at the inn-keeper, whose face seemed to him extremely displeasing. M. Têterol had no wish to die.

"Has the Abbé Miraud his old Marianna still?" he resumed.

"Old Marianna! I don't know," returned the other, as he went back to his saucepans.

"Idiot!" growled M. Têterol, between his teeth. An inn-keeper who did not know old Marianna, and who imagined that M. Têterol was on the point of dying, seemed to him a very imbecile person. He dis-

liked him also because he had spoken in a free and easy style of the Abbé Miraud. Since he had made a fortune, M. Têterol had not approved of nobodies meddling with argument ; he considered free thought a pleasure of the rich.

As soon as he had breakfasted he set out for the parsonage. He needed not to ask his way, or even to remember it ; his feet knew it. He rang, and it was not old Marianna who opened the door ; there was a good reason for it ; she had been dead for twenty-five years at least. M. Têterol stared for a moment at the unknown servant, who, with her hand on the latch, inquired his name and business.

Then, pushing her aside, he traversed a corridor paved with small stones, which led to a glass door. He opened the door and found himself in the garden. On the left a fruit wall, on the right an aviary, in the centre beds of vegetables, at the end an apiary : all were there. But if the garden had remained nearly the same, he who cultivated it was very much changed ; as the innkeeper had said, he was beginning to break up. At this moment he was occupied in giving corn to his chickens ; he spoke to them in a tremulous voice, and M. Têterol noticed that one of his legs refused its service. But he recognized the abbé by his smile : it was the smile of a man who has long since made up his mind to do a great deal of good and to reap much ingratitude.

“To whom have I the honor of speaking ?” asked the good priest, inviting him to sit down on a bench, and seating himself on the other side of an old stone

table which had lost its uprightness. The bees hovered around them, but did not molest them ; they respected the curé of Saligneux, and perhaps the new-comer frightened them.

M. Têterol drummed on the stone table with his fingers. "Look at me well ! you do not recognize me, M. le Curé ?" he said, at length.

"Excuse me, I am rather near-sighted."

"And you have forgotten Jean Têterol ?"

"Jean Têterol !" said the Abbé Miraud ; and he searched his memory, but found no Jean Têterol there.

"You no longer remember a deserted child whom you found and placed as under-gardener with the Baron de Saligneux ?"

"Ah ! wait, I remember him ; but that was long ago : the wicked rogue ! He went away one day, and we have never heard from him since. I always thought he would end in the hospital : he believed in neither God nor the devil."

"Neither God nor the devil troubled themselves about his affairs. Fortunately, he met a good man who took an interest in him, taught him to work, and put him in a way to earn his living. I was the good man, and thanks to me Jean Têterol has made his way. He has not become a millionaire ; what would you have ? A man does what he can, and a million is not so easily found. But he enjoys to-day a moderate competence. And see here ! you gave the rogue two crowns on the day of his departure. Here they are—the very ones. He does not return them to you—he

wishes to keep them as a souvenir of you ; but these two crowns have earned other crowns. M. le Curé, I have always paid my debts ; here are five hundred francs for your poor people."

"Catherine, bring us something to drink, and of the best !" cried the Abbé Miraud. "I wish to celebrate the return of Jean Têterol, who has not forgotten his curé, and who is good to the poor."

M. Têterol was astonished to hear that he was good to the poor : he did not pride himself on possessing that virtue, and he curled his nostrils, as he always did when any one said something which surprised him. His curé was the only man to whom he felt under obligation, and he had set his heart on acquitting the debt ; his pride was freed from a yoke.

Catherine brought two glasses and a bottle of wine of Arbois, which they drank slowly, and the conversation went on. Abbé Miraud felt rejuvenated by the unexpected gift which heaven had just sent to his poor people, and by the unhopèd-for resurrection of the naughty rogue for whom he had long mourned, and who reappeared suddenly before him, under the form of a big *bourgeois*, square, massive, and overgrown, the most real of apparitions ; the manner in which he set his elbows on the table showed him to be a man of weight and authority—one of those men who permit of no doubt as to their existence. Although he had grown old, the abbé still remained curious ; he liked to know about things. He put M. Têterol through a long series of questions, seeking to

make him relate the story of his life in detail. It was not one of M. Têterol's days of expansion ; his replies were vague and evasive. He understood perfectly the art of talking without saying anything.

"Well, God be praised !" said the curé, despairing of conquering this voluble silence ; "you are at your case. Henceforth, my dear Têterol, you can live on your income."

"My income ! that does not amount to much, but I have enough to live on. Ah ! I have drudged too much, you see ; I could do no more. I have put my key under my door, and wish to rest."

"Yet you have not the appearance of a weary man," said the Abbé Miraud, fixing his eyes admiringly on his powerful form. "Those shoulders could carry the Jura."

"Do not depend on it, curé ; you must not judge by appearances. I have felt for a long time that the machine would go no longer. What can you expect ? A man is not made of iron. All at once I said to myself : I will return to Saligneux ; a small nest suits a small bird. There is sun enough here for everybody, is there not ? But I fear that land is very dear."

"Oh, we will find you what you want."

"What I want is very little. I have such simple tastes. I am a hermit in quest of a hermitage. I should like a little garden—oh ! not as large as this ; a bed of vegetables with sunflowers at the ends—I have always liked sunflowers ; and then a little house—a shed, a hut, a cabin."

And, as he uttered these words, M. Têterol tried to

make himself very, very small, as if to creep into a rabbit-hutch ; but he did not succeed, for his shoulders forbade it.

"Whoever desires little is sure to find what he seeks," replied the curé. "Moreover, on returning to the country, you began with a good deed. That will bring you luck, my dear Têterol."

"Debts should always be paid, and I have acquitted myself of that," replied M. Têterol, drawing himself up and regaining his ordinary dimensions.

He interrogated the curé in his turn, and made him relate all that had taken place at Saligneux during his long absence. As was his custom, he reserved for the last the question which he had most at heart, and which he would have liked to put first.

He emptied his glass, and said, "And how is Baron Adhémar?"

"Baron Adhémar! Then you do not know that he died July 9, 1855?" replied the curé, very much astonished that an intelligent man could be ignorant of an event of so much consequence.

M. Têterol's face grew cloudy and elongated ; it seemed to him that his plan was ruined.

"It is done on purpose—it is a deliberate plan ; everybody dies !" he muttered. "And who possesses Saligneux now?"

"Who? his son!"

"That little Patrice, that blonde boy—that little fellow who always wore sky-blue cravats?"

"That little boy is a man of forty-six," returned

the curé, smiling ; " he is a widower, and his daughter is a very pretty young lady, who is being educated in a convent in Paris."

" What a rage for change !" cried M. Têterol, engrossed with his idea. " Has Baron Patrice de Saligneux the same character as his father ?"

" There is a great difference. The one never enjoyed himself except at Saligneux, and always lived here ; the other is bored here, and only comes occasionally, in passing, to consult with his steward, or to open or close the hunting-season."

" And where is he during the rest of the time ?"

" In Paris, at the watering-places, in Italy. He travels everywhere ; he is light-footed."

" So was his father, in his way," growled M. Têterol, rubbing his leg mechanically. He remembered that something had touched it.

" No, you cannot say like father like son," replied the Abbé Miraud. " Baron Adhémar has been known, on occasion, to take off his coat and arm himself with a rake, to help get in the hay, when the weather was threatening. He was a laborious, diligent, economical man, who had an eye to everything, and was precise and exact in all his movements."

" Very precise," interrupted M. Têterol.

" What a mortification for him in the other world, if he heard that shortly after his decease half his property was encumbered with mortgages, and the other half sold !"

M. Têterol's eye sparkled. " Baron Patrice has sold half of Saligneux !" he exclaimed. " What a

crime ! Such a fine domain ! Who were the purchasers ? ”

“ A rich Lyonnese, who comes here to pass the summers with his family ; a large miller from Pont-d’Ain, who has built mills on the banks of the Limourde. The rest was sold in lots piece by piece. But let me tell you one thing, my dear Têterol. Our peasants maintain that it is a dangerous thing to buy any of the land which belonged to Baron Adhémar, the land he loved so well. It is an insult to him, and he avenges it, dead though he be. In truth, there is a sort of fate about it. The Lyonnese is disgusted with his house because he had the misfortune to lose one of his daughters there last year, and it is said that the miller does not thrive.”

M. Têterol did not answer ; he was absorbed in a profound reverie.

“ What are you thinking about ? ” asked the Abbé Miraud.

He seemed to wake suddenly. “ I am thinking, M. le Curé,” he replied, “ that Baron Patrice de Saligneux sold his land because he has debts, and I also think that he has debts because he is a man of pleasure.”

“ That is about it,” replied the abbé sadly.

“ It is said, M. le Curé, that it is necessary to go to Africa, in order to see cannibals. I have seen in Paris pretty little women who make a business of eating men. They eat them greedily, and leave them nothing but their eyes, with which to weep. The baron has met one of these wretches on the street ; she has bewitched him, inflamed him ; and a man who is inflamed has no

longer reason, good sense, or anything else. He commits follies, he falls into the clutches of the usurers, and finally he sells a vineyard, then a field, then a meadow. Millers and Lyonnese profit by it; everything goes, and the dead are displeased."

"Ah! excuse me, my dear Têterol. Heaven be praised, things have not come to such a pass yet as you represent. Baron Patrice has made a breach in his inheritance, but the rest is good. He has still his château, his park, his finest meadows, and the better part of his forests. What a shame it would be for him, and what a sorrow for us, if he were to sell a château which the Saligneux have owned from father to son for centuries! I know him; he will do nothing of the sort. He has sown his wild oats; with advancing age he will quiet down. He is a fine man after all. He fought against the Prussians; he commanded a battalion of the garde mobile, and had two horses killed under him in the engagement at Mont-béliard. With all that he is gentle, humane, polite; everybody loves him." And he added, "Let us drink to the health of Baron Patrice de Saligneux. God bless him, his château, and his charming daughter!"

"Without forgetting his ladies," replied M. Têterol, with a grin. "Your wine of Arbois is excellent; it would go against my conscience to use it to drink the health of a fool."

"I like wise men," said the good curé, "but they should be indulgent, and they should believe in God."

"A man believes what he can," replied M. Têterol, abruptly. Then, stretching his arm across the table,

he took and pressed the hand of the Abbé Miraud, with a surly grace peculiar to him ; for everybody has some kind of grace, a Têterol as well as an elephant.

“Who knows, M. le Curé ? When I have my garden, my sunflowers, my little cabin, I will reflect, and perhaps faith will come to me. And your good God ought to love me, for he has always had a taste for hermits.”

M. Têterol quitted the Curé of Saligneux to take a walk. For a while he followed the highway ; then he took a path whose pebbles he had often heard rattling under his wooden shoes. One would have said, to see him walk so slowly, with an irresolute pace, that he was an idler guided by chance ; but he left nothing to chance in his smallest actions. He soon attained the summit of a knoll, where there had formerly been a fortress, and which commanded a view of the whole country. He sat down on a large stone which lay among the rubbish, after having taken the precaution of spreading his checked handkerchief under him. His face was turned toward the pretty valley, communicating on the south with the plain by a narrow opening, sheltered by a hill from the north winds. A rather large brook flowed there, with its clear waters, whose course was interrupted by two little falls, after which it resumed its lazy air, like those idlers who are awakened with a start by an alarm, and fall asleep again even before being reassured : there are happy lives in which accidents are of no account.

At the foot of the hill is a château, rather small than large, but well situated, proud, and elegant. The

architect who constructed it, during the last years of the fifteenth century, gave his fancy free play : he mingled the Gothic with the Renaissance style, which was just coming in. The façade, one story high, pierced with large windows with mullions of stone, terminates at one end in a large, round, machicolated tower, at the other in a square pavilion, surmounted by a pretty lantern delicately carved. The pointed roofs are decorated with flowers ; the gables of the dormer windows are crowned with pinnacles in the most picturesque taste. In front extends a terrace, bordered by a white marble balustrade, and giving access by two flights of steps to a vast lawn, shaded here and there by venerable oaks. Behind the castle extend woods which ascend to the very summit of the mountain.

M. Têterol considered this château and all its appurtenances attentively. He passed in review and counted five hundred acres ; he guessed without difficulty which were sold, which mortgaged, and that the brook formed the boundary-line. He cast a disdainful glance on the little villa of the Lyonnese, and on the mill of the miller of Pont-d'Ain. The villa was not inhabited ; all the shutters were closed. The mill-wheel was turning, but with an ill-grace, scarcely enough to relieve its conscience ; the wheel did not believe in its future. The brain of the future hermit was in a ferment ; labor was going on there, accompanied by a rumbling similar to the noise heard in some clocks when about to strike. He was endeavoring to disengage his ideas, which, up to that time, had

been slightly confused. At length the château appeared to him in all its beauty, like Venus rising from the wave, and his eye flashed : it was the look of a lover. If Baron Patrice could have caught that look, if he could have suspected what it meant, he would have double-locked his park-gate.

M. Têterol began to play with his big, bony, hairy, nervous, tanned hands ; this play pleased him. After having examined them in detail, after having counted the twenty-eight joints, he made them turn and twist like marionettes ; and as he looked at them he spoke to them. "You have worked well," he said to them. "You have mixed plaster, cut stone ; and then you have handled men, raked together money. You are good workmen ; what are you going to do now to amuse yourselves ?"

The next moment he joined them in the form of a cup ; and at the bottom of this cup, he distinctly perceived a château, a round tower, a square pavilion, gables with pinnacles, a lawn, meadows, fields, woods, and a dead baron, who tore his hair, and cried to a living baron, "What a disgrace ! you have allowed this devil of a man to take everything from us ! To-day Saligneux is his !"

IV.

THE gods are disappearing, and aristocrats are disappearing also. The world is so constituted that social injustice aids in forming great characters, and

that certain abuses are the condition of certain virtues. A privileged nobility contracts a debt toward the State; it receives honors and repays them by services. As it does not live under the common rule, it considers itself bound to entertain sentiments which are not common, and to perform deeds which all men would not perform. The taste for what is extraordinary must be developed in the soul, and there is a class whose peculiar office it is to set great examples. But when the rising tide of democracy has submerged all privileges, when the ruling classes find themselves dispossessed of their advantages, and placed on the same footing as the rest of the world, they soon come to think and act like the rest of the world. Farewell to everything uncommon; the circumstances are small; why should souls be great? It is all over with fine sentiments and exceptional virtues. The aristocrat becomes a gentleman, the gentleman a squire, and the squire is only distinguished from the peasant by being more elegant in his vices, and a little more extravagant in his pleasures. If the question is of business or duty, he regards life from a *bourgeois* point of view; he shuts himself up in his egotistical happiness, closes the door, and draws the bolts on passers-by.

The house of Saligneux had a respectable past. In truth, it had never shone in the first rank, nor possessed a great position, nor even led what is called a *gay* life; but it had figured with honor in secondary rôles. Not to mention the crusades, it is certain that it had furnished France, as far back as the sixteenth

century, with useful men, good servants who had distinguished themselves in politics or arms. A Saligneux once sacrificed his property and his life in order to give Paris to the Béarnese ; another Saligneux was employed by Mazarin in many important negotiations. One of their descendants, who united to an antique character an original mind, incurred Mme. de Pompadour's dislike by the blunt frankness of his courageous attacks. Having been exiled to his estate, he refused to make any effort to regain favor, and grew old among his peasants, dispensing his revenues in charity, and carrying out the motto of his family : "*I owe little and do much.*" Baron Adhémar's father had been keeper of the seals under Louis XVIII., and had acquitted himself honorably in his office. It was thought he had the making of a statesman in him, but unfortunately he died of apoplexy, at an age when ambitious men are still young. Some years later, Baron Adhémar, being unable to reconcile himself with the revolution of July, and unwilling to serve the younger branch, buried himself at Saligneux. He was a man of mediocre intellect, but of sound sense, with a love for order and duty, generous, but discriminating ; he kept his accounts by double entry, and was an accomplished farmer. He did not carry his horror of public life to such an extent as to refuse to be mayor ; he filled the office for eighteen consecutive years, and acquired in his commune an influence proportioned to his zeal, which nothing could discourage.

His son, Baron Patrice de Saligneux, had never undertaken to deliver the Holy Sepulchre, nor got

himself killed at Dorylæum, like the first and most legendary of his ancestors. He had never given a crown nor a drop of his blood to place Henry IV. on the throne ; Mazarin had never employed him in any negotiation ; he had not incurred the ill-will of any of King Louis XV.'s favorites ; he did not aspire to become the keeper of the seals ; and no one considered him a distinguished agriculturist. He was none the less a Baron de Saligneux, delighted to be so, and very well satisfied with the figure he made on earth. To sum up : He had been mayor for eighteen months, and these eighteen months had sufficed to make him tired of his subordinates, who had become tired of him in a still shorter time. Not that he angered them by his rudeness, or offended them by his haughty ways, for no one could be more courteous or gracious ; but they complained of his negligence, his absent-mindedness, his perfectly miraculous forgetfulness. This mayor had holes in his memory, in which official reports and whole bundles of documents disappeared as if by enchantment. Although he wished well to all the world, when a complainant came to relate his grievances to him, he listened with a charming smile, which said, " Mon Dieu ! if you only knew how little I care for all that ! " He availed himself of the first pretext to regain his liberty and fly away to his own pleasures, only reappearing at Saligneux at long intervals. He did not enjoy country life, did not care for agriculture, and left to his steward, M. Crépin, who possessed his full confidence, without deserving it perhaps, the entire charge of managing his estate.

His feet adored the asphalt of Paris ; it was there alone that he seemed to live.

Being well formed and exquisitely elegant, he was called at his club Handsome Patrice. This adorable young blonde had had much success with women, from his earliest youth, and the list of his conquests was long. Unfortunately, some of them had been very costly, so that at his father's death he was over head and ears in debt ; and, in order to be exact, he should have substituted the following motto for his hereditary device : "I owe much, I pay little, and I do nothing at all." He married shortly afterward. His wife, who had a good deal of character, kept him in check for two years, which seemed very long years to him ; then he returned to his cherished habits, and baccarat devoured the dowry. Fortunately, Saligneux remained ; he contented himself with making a breach there ; and this was the triumph of wisdom, in which he was aided by his sense of honor. Having become a widower at forty, and being the father of a little girl whom he adored, in order to live more freely according to his taste, he confided her to his sister, the Countess de Juines, who, finding her difficult to bring up, lost no time in placing her in a convent. Her father went to see her, embraced her hastily, and said, "It is lucky you are my daughter ; otherwise I should fall in love with you." In short, he was an agreeable man, cheerful, easy-tempered, to whom bows were as easy as pleasant words and promises ; capable of forcible action, as he had proved during the war, but incapable of prolonged effort, of reflection, or of any

control over his idleness and light-mindedness. They said of him, "He is a gallant man." What more could be said? He had nothing thoroughly respectable about him except his opinions, which, in the midst of all the temptations and vicissitudes of his life, had preserved the immaculate whiteness of a lily. In short, he belonged to the race of well-meaning idlers and good-for-nothings. If Baron Patrice de Saligneux had died, neither the universe, nor France, nor his department, nor his canton, would have felt the loss in the least. On the other hand, this disagreeable event would have caused the baron profound chagrin: he was fond of life, and, after all, if he had not made any men happy, he could boast of benefits conferred on women.

M. Têterol did not stay long at the White Cross inn, whose bar-room resounded too frequently with the squabbles of drunken carters. When his brain was at work, it was necessary that all about him should be silent and at rest; and his brain had worked without cessation since his arrival at Saligneux. Moreover, he could not forgive the innkeeper for having dared to maintain that, some day or other, Jean Têterol would depart this life: he considered the remark highly indecorous, and the booby's face was as disagreeable to him as that of a raven prophesying misfortune. The Abbé Miraud made inquiries, and then announced to him that there was, at a gunshot from the village, a modest, peaceful little house, which the proprietor was inclined to sell. He went to see it: the house and garden were just what he wanted, the

humble hermitage which he had beheld in his dreams ; but he signified a desire to try it before buying, by living in it a few months. The proposition was accepted.

He spent his days in walking about, with his hands in his pockets, his broad-brimmed Quaker hat turned back from his brow, wandering, prowling right and left, chatting with Tom, Dick, and Harry, asking questions about everything, but particularly about the price and yield of the land—just like a man who has time to get rid of, a good deal of idle curiosity, and a taste for useless conversation. Every word people said to him penetrated to the very bottom of his mind, and left it no more. At the end of a week he knew the division of property in the commune of Saligneux as accurately as the surveyor's register. Every evening, with his pencil and note-book in his hand, he jotted down figures, added and multiplied, and then dreamed of them all night.

One evening, as he was taking the air at his own door, and talking with the woman who kept house for him, she said to him, "There is our baron talking with our curé in the road."

He raised his head, and at a distance of ten paces he perceived the Abbé Miraud in company with a handsome blonde man, who, though not in his first youth, was yet not an old beau. His proud, distinguished-looking head was admirably placed on his shoulders ; his elegant figure had preserved all its suppleness ; his face bore a rather weary look, but the features were fine, the expression charming. M. Tê-

terol thought he remembered to have met the face on the boulevard.

He advanced to the road. The Abbé Miraud made him a sign to come nearer, and said to M. de Saligneux, "M. le Baron, permit me to present M. Têterol, of whom I had the honor of speaking to you."

"I am enchanted to make your acquaintance, M. Têterol," said the baron, accompanying his words with the true bow of a gentleman, who does not stint his politeness to any one.

"Or rather to resume it, M. le Baron," said M. Têterol, making a profound salute; "but, in truth, you were so young when I was a simple laborer in your father's service, that you are very excusable for having forgotten me."

"Welcome to Saligneux," returned the baron. "Saligneux is proud to see again those of its children who have succeeded, by their intelligence and will, in making their way and gaining an honorable position in the world."

He pronounced these words in the same tone in which he would have delivered a fixed harangue at an agricultural fair. He had in his head a certain number of formulas which he had learned when discharging the duties of mayor during eighteen months. They suited any occasion, and he used them as appropriate remarks in a conversation which possessed little or no interest for him, while his imagination wandered from the Jockey Club to the Café Anglais, from the Café Anglais to the turf at Longchamps, and from Longchamps to the foyer of the ballet. M. Têterol

was not deceived ; he divined that, while addressing him, and appearing to look at him, M. de Saligneux was in reality a hundred leagues away. Baron Patrice was eternally absent.

"Yes, M. le Baron, who have made their way after a fashion. Every one does his best. The Abbé Miraud, who has always been good to me, taught me when I was very young that happiness lies in mediocrity, and that rich people are rather to be pitied than envied. That lesson always remained here," he added, tapping three times his narrow forehead, which was rounded and hard as granite.

"And you do not regret Paris?" asked M. de Saligneux.

"Oh ! not at all, M. le Baron. I am in my element here. I am as happy as a certain prophet—M. le Curé, what is the name of the prophet who passed three days and three nights in the belly of a whale?"

"Jonah," said the curé.

"Exactly ; it was Jonah. Well ! I am like Jonah. I passed thirty-eight years in the whale's belly, and I was suffocating. Thank God, it cast me out at last, and I see the heavens and the green trees again. Those Parisians think they have a sky, but they have not, and their trees are ridiculous."

While he was speaking, M. de Saligneux looked out of the corner of his eye at this surprising and phenomenal being, who preferred the steeple of Saligneux to all the pleasures of Paris. For his part he was very much attached to the whale.

"Are you satisfied with your little house?" asked the curé. "Shall you buy it eventually?"

"I believe I shall commit that extravagance, although the price seems to me rather high. Bless me! I am obliged to calculate. I fear I shall be taken for a *bourgeois* of Batignolles, and that they will want a ransom for me."

M. de Saligneux thought the interview had lasted long enough. "M. Têterol," said he, in a courteous and almost paternal tone, "if I can be of any service to you, pray intrust your interests to me: I shall be charmed to be of use to you."

"A thousand thanks, M. le Baron," exclaimed M. Têterol humbly.

The baron was afraid of being taken at his word, and hastened to add—"Ah! I envy you, M. Têterol! Here you are settled at Saligneux for the rest of your days. Would that I could indulge my taste for the country! Alas! to-morrow, or the day after, I shall say farewell to sky and verdure. Cruel necessity compels me to return to Paris. During my absence, address yourself to M. Crépin, my steward; I will request him at once to place himself at your disposal. *Au revoir*, M. Têterol. I hope to see you again soon."

Thereupon he pursued his way accompanied by the Abbé Miraud, who said to him, "Well, M. le Baron, what do you think of him?"

"He is very well; he impresses me as an honest man, and a real rustic philosopher. You must look out, M. le Curé, and see that he is not asked too much for his hut; I should be distressed if any one

were to take advantage of his simplicity. Really, he possesses a straightforwardness and naïveté which please me. I wish him well ; he interests me."

The baron did not hear the curé's reply. He had just caught sight of a fresh, pretty, peasant maid crossing the road, and she seemed to him a far more agreeable object to contemplate than the rustic philosopher. A few moments afterward he took leave of the curé ; and when he reached Saligneux he had completely forgotten the existence of M. Téterol. The next week handsome, useless Patrice returned to Paris, where he remained all winter, passing his days and nights in the most agreeable manner. He had resolved to return to Saligneux very early in the spring : he did nothing of the sort. The month of March found him installed near Monaco, in a villa surrounded by olive-trees, sunshine, crocuses, and anemones. At the beginning of June he might have been met at Spa. At the end of July, he was wandering on the banks of the most romantic fiord in Norway. About the middle of December he was on his way to St. Petersburg, where he remained for five months, writing to such of his friends as expressed their surprise at his long absence, that the capital of all the Russias was a charming abode ; that moreover it was the only city where a person is not cold in winter ; and that he did not dare leave until spring, as he was very much afraid of draughts and inflammation of the chest.

Men are at the mercy of accidents, and men of intelligence even more than others. The accident which had precipitated the Baron de Saligneux out

of his ordinary path, and drawn him like a comet into an extravagant orbit through Monaco, Spa, Stockholm, Christiania, and St. Petersburg—this accident was a woman of the north—married, it was said, but not happily mated. She had taught him—at least he thought so—the delights of a grand passion. He believed he had grown younger by twenty years; he persuaded himself that this woman was the real, the only woman living, and that he loved for the first and last time. It was a sort of illusion to which intelligent men are subject.

Nevertheless, in the midst of his adventurous peregrinations and ecstatic transports, the baron remembered from time to time that there was in France a department of the Ain, and in one of the cantons of this department a château of Saligneux; that this château belonged to him, and that he had left a steward there to watch over the harvests. He wrote to M. Crépin to beg him to render an account and send him money. He received very brief replies. M. Crépin knew his man thoroughly, and that he was averse to long business letters. If his had been long they would not have been read through; so he spared his ink. A brief recapitulation of facts, the essential figures—that was all he sent.

The baron also remembered from time to time that he was the father of a charming girl who was in her eighteenth year, and who was urgently entreating to be removed from the convent where she was receiving her education, which seemed to her interminable. He received from her letters full of chit-

chat, resembling the twitter of a bird in a cage, impatient to take its flight, and busy in beating against the cage with its wings : the meadows are so green, the groves are so leafy, the world is so vast and so beautiful ! With these epistles came missives from the superior of the convent. She complained that Mlle. Claire de Saligneux was mischievous and as malicious as a wild sparrow, as bold as a little dragon—a regular tomboy in spite of her seventeen years ; that she was too fond of laughing, of teasing and bantering her companions ; that she frequently spent her hours of study in drawing caricatures or making paper dolls ; that she played tricks on her schoolmates, putting peas in their chairs, shutting up cats in their closets, or placing live frogs in their beds.

Thereupon the baron took up his pen and addressed severe lectures and the most strenuous remonstrances to his daughter. He scolded her for her giddiness. He represented to her in the finest of styles that life is a very serious affair ; that men and women are not put into this world to amuse themselves ; that it is necessary to learn early in life to govern one's caprices, and control one's will ; that no pleasure is to be compared to the joy which the fulfillment of duty and the testimony of a good conscience afford a well-regulated heart. The last of his letters was a real masterpiece, an incomparable production—a model of grave, nervous, pathetic, overwhelming eloquence. It will scarcely be believed that he wrote it seated on a cushion at the feet of the enchantress who had given him back his heart of

twenty ; that she held the inkstand in her white hand, and that he used her adored knees as a desk. A man who could not find sublime inspiration in such circumstances might well be despaired of. The deplorable part of it all was that Mlle. de Saligneux read only the beginning and end of the letter, and that she skipped the middle, which was the most admirable part of all.

The longest journeys and the sweetest errors have a limit fixed by destiny. The pair separated. Which of the two got out of conceit of the other—she or he ? The fact remains that in the spring of 1873 the baron set out for Saligneux with a less triumphant air than he had worn when he left it. All life consists of parting and returning. Who has not seen such a dog return home, who, after having given himself up for a week of the most decided vagabondage, to all the temptations of a too susceptible heart, comes back some fine morning to his kennel, covered with mud, with drooping ears and shaggy skin, betraying the sad effects of his stormy passion by the languor of his glance ? The baron was not muddy, but he seemed weary ; he had several wrinkles on his brow, and a dreamy look in his eyes—and his eyes had certainly never been dreamy before. This intelligent man, having returned to a state of calm reflection, had counted up the cost of his error ; and all errors are very costly for intelligent men, for they appropriate to their service all the ingenuity of their brains and all their powers of invention. In proportion as the baron approached his destination, he became more pensive ; he foresaw that

the reproaches of his steward would be joined to those of his conscience.

M. Crépin had come to meet him at Ambérieux, a railway station whence the château of Saligneux can be reached by a good road without passing through the village, and the baron had a particular desire not to traverse it on that day ; he wished to enter his mansion without trumpet or drum. The sun was just up. He had experienced no pleasure in contemplating the dawn, with its golden hair and rosy fingers. He experienced still less on discovering on the platform, at a distance, his steward, whose bald, pointed head appeared to him as prosaic as a register, as insipid as a ready-reckoner, as unpleasant as an inventory, as lugubrious as a remorse. Alas ! all was over : he had emerged from the abode of enchanting illusions ; he found himself once more in the sad world of realities and Crépins.

They stepped into the carriage, and drove for some time without exchanging a word. M. Crépin cowered in his corner, and watched the baron stealthily, with the eyes of an appraiser ; he was trying to decide on the amount of deterioration, on the waste. All at once he exclaimed in a bantering tone, "Really, M. le Baron, I began to fear that we should never have the happiness of seeing you again."

In his quality of right-hand man, M. Crépin addressed the baron familiarly. He knew his weaknesses, his difficulties ; and although he preferred to profit by them, rather than to complain of them, yet he could not resist the temptation occasionally to make

remarks to him which were tinged with malice and irony. Heretofore he had never permitted himself to assume a bantering tone ; he did so on this occasion, and M. de Saligneux, who was very sensitive to shades of manner, perceived it.

"Whatever people do, my dear Crépin," he replied, in a careless tone, "they always meet again ; but I am delighted that my absence seemed long to you. I wanted to try bear-hunting. And then, I believe I wrote to you that Russia is the only country in the world where they understand how to protect themselves from the cold, the only country where one finds doors and windows which shut properly. When one begins a winter in St. Petersburg, one must stay until the end, under penalty of catching cold."

"Oh, M. le Baron, rheumatism would not venture to attack you !" replied the steward.

"Of course not, of course," murmured M. de Saligneux, passing his hand over his left knee, where he had felt a disagreeable tingling for the past three weeks, from which he suffered particularly when going to bed. "But enough has been said about me. What has happened at Saligneux during my absence?"

"My letters must have informed you."

"Your letters were terribly short."

"Would you have read them if they had been longer?" asked M. Crépin, with a grin.

The baron looked at him in surprise. "Inform me of the facts," he returned, dryly.

"Eh ! Mon Dieu, I have only disagreeable news to communicate. A great change has taken place

lately in the country : more than change—a revolution.”

“The plague ! but go on ; I am very curious to hear what you have to say.”

“Well, in the first place, the mills—you still remember the mills ? The mills are torn down, M. le Baron. The undertaking failed. The buildings, the land, the fields of wheat and rye, have all been sold at a low price.”

“Oh ! that is no reason why I should put a piece of crape on my hat. So much the worse for the sleeping partners ; Heaven be praised ! we did not belong to them. What do we care whether there is one mill more or less in the world ?”

“And then M. Guibert—you know the great Lyonnese stockholder who bought fifty acres or so of you once on a time, and built himself a pretty villa—M. Guibert has decided to sell.”

“Why ?”

“You know he lost one of his children, who died of the measles. He did not return for two years. The thing which completely disgusted him was a rumor that was in circulation. It was asserted that the mills would be replaced by chemical works, which would infect the country for two leagues around. The report was false, but he believed it.”

“That was bad for him. I can get along without the society of M. Guibert. There are certain misfortunes, M. Crépin, which we should try to bear with calm philosophy.”

“Well, M. le Baron, the rage for selling having

spread in the community like an epidemic, all the peasants who ever bought a bit of land of you have got rid of it."

"So those are the catastrophes which you have to announce! Leave off your funereal face, my dear Crépin. What difference does it make to me, I should like to know, whether it is Baptiste or Mathurin, Lucas or Gervais, who cultivates fields which no longer belong to me?"

M. Crépin was silent for a moment; then he said, in a grave and solemn tone: "M. le Baron, what was the policy of Henry IV.? He desired that France should continue to be surrounded by small states. That inspired king comprehended that, if those small states were ever absorbed in a great empire, France would be diminished, even if she did not lose an inch of territory. Saligneux was formerly surrounded by small principalities, little duchies, and little dwellings of serfs. A union has been effected; henceforth you have for neighbors a great empire, and I consider that it detracts from your importance, M. le Baron."

The last words produced a great effect. M. de Saligneux's face darkened. Up to that moment he had been half lying down, with his legs stretched on the front of the carriage. He drew them back hastily and sat upright, as if, finding himself belittled, he occupied too much space.

"So," he exclaimed, "it is one and the same purchaser who has dared to acquire all the alienated land, constituting about half of the domain of Saligneux!

It is to be regretted, I acknowledge. Really, M. Crépin, your zeal has been caught napping. It seems to me you have failed in vigilance and skill. It was your duty at least to warn me of this."

"Oh! oh! the man whom you have the unhappiness to have for a neighbor now is very acute. He conducted his vast operation with the greatest secrecy, by sending active and discreet agents into the field. That devil of a man knows what he wants; he knows how to speak or to be silent, according to circumstances. He is a great politician, who sees which way the wind blows, and seizes each man by his tender point. If he had allowed his designs to transpire, exorbitant prices would have been demanded. Everybody, large owners and small, have been taken in the net, and the most obstinate have ended by selling. I think the fellow must be enormously rich; he has apparently very decisive arguments, and, when he takes an idea into his head, he never retreats, cost what it may. For my part, I was a thousand leagues from suspecting his intentions, and I could not warn you. After all, if I had warned you, what good would it have done?"

"We might have bought back some bits of land."

"With whose money? With mine?" asked M. Crépin, insolently.

The baron felt his hands twitching—he longed to box his steward's ears; but at this moment he caught a glimpse of the towers of his château between two masses of trees, and it seemed to him that the towers stretched their necks to see him, and cried to him,

"Whence come you, master fool? We have not seen you for eighteen months." He restrained himself, and said to himself, "They are right; why did I go so far? And who is this important personage, this founder of empires, whom Henry IV. did not foresee?" he demanded in a calmer tone.

"A nobody who has become somebody. He asserts that he had the honor of being introduced to you by the Abbé Mirzud a few days before your departure. His name is Jean Téterol, and no one in the canton talks of anything but him."

M. de Saligneux searched the depths of his memory; he succeeded in drawing forth a name and a face. He distinctly recollected a hermit, a rustic philosopher, who inhabited a little house, and dreamed of buying it and ending his days there. "There are philosophers who make dupes," thought he.

The carriage rolled along a graveled avenue. It soon arrived in a courtyard, and stopped before an awning. "Alas! M. le Baron, you have not done with your surprises," resumed the pitiless Crépin, as he descended. "There is one in particular from which I cannot shield you."

At these words he turned an angle of the château, and betook himself, followed by the baron, to the terrace. Having arrived there, he pointed out something which could not have been agreeable, for M. de Saligneux, having looked at the object indicated, uttered a sorrowful exclamation, and remained as if petrified.

"What is that frightful building?" he exclaimed after a pause.

"It is the White House."

"And what is the White House?"

"It is the house which this conqueror, this founder of empires, whom Henry IV. did not foresee, has built for himself. He does not live there yet; only the heavy walls and the roof are finished. He occupies the villa of the Lyonnese temporarily; but he has a perfect army of workmen, and at this rate, they say, he will have his house-warming before the end of a year."

As we have already said, the château of Saligneux was built against the side of a hill, and commanded a view of a little valley, which ended in a sort of neck or strait, through which the brook flowed. It seemed as though this narrow opening had been arranged expressly in order to provide the inhabitants of the manor with a beautiful outlook over the plain, the course of the Ain, and the serrated mountains which melted away on the horizon. This landscape had disappeared. Nothing could be seen from the terrace but the steep banks of the river, and on the right an enormous pile of stone four stories high, flanked by out-buildings and walls, which completely cut off the view.

"They have walled us in!" sighed M. de Saligneux. Then, striking his forehead, he turned quickly to M. Crépin: "One moment," said he. "I shall force your M. Têterol to move off. The piece of land where he has seen fit to locate his barracks or roost was sold on the express condition that no building should ever be erected there. You cannot be ignorant of that clause, Master Crépin."

"What I do know is, that M. Téterol bought off that condition at a cost of twenty thousand francs."

"And you consented to it?"

"Be so good as to recall the facts, M. le Baron. I wrote to you on the subject eleven months ago. You replied, 'We will see about it.' And you added in a postscript, 'I shall consider the matter. Twenty thousand francs are not to be despised.' I have the letter, and will show it to you."

In the giddiness caused by the whirlwind of his thoughts and pleasures, M. de Saligneux had written this unlucky postscript without giving himself the trouble of weighing the consequences. He would have liked to give himself ten good blows with a horsewhip; still more gladly would he have administered twenty blows to the rascal who had taken care not to explain to him clearly the precise object of the transaction. He looked him straight in the eye, and fancied he discerned there that honest M. Crépin had had a secret understanding, and not a gratuitous one, with the enemy. He resolved to get rid of a man who had deceived him, robbed him, and preached morality to him, all at once. That sort of combination appeared to him unseemly.

"I abide by what I have said, M. Crépin," said he. "Your letters and explanations were decidedly too short."

"Is it my fault," retorted the other arrogantly, "if long explanations displease you?"

"M. Crépin, if I were in need of a man who should occupy himself solely with being agreeable to me, and

doing everything I wish, I have that man at hand, and he is here," exclaimed M. de Saligneux, tapping his chest. "On the contrary, what I need by me is an honest counselor, who would encourage me occasionally to do what displeases me. You are not that man, and I find myself obliged, though with regret, to deprive myself of your valuable society."

M. Crépin caught the ball on the rebound ; he had compassed his ends. During the ten years he had spent at Saligneux he had gleaned, cheated, and placed his illegal profits in safety. The sum was a sufficiently round one ; perhaps M. Têterol had completed it. Thenceforth his sincerest desire was to have the baron discharge him, and to go to Bourg, where he could bring his fine talents to perfection by founding a business agency. What was the use of remaining at Saligneux ? The fowl had grown too thin, and M. Crépin did not care to pluck any but fat fowls.

He drew himself up, and replied in a sardonic tone : "As you please, M. le Baron. Since you are tired of my good and loyal services, I shall leave your house this very evening. It is not at all certain that it will belong to you much longer. M. Têterol is this day the proprietor of half your domain ; he will never rest until he acquires the remainder of it. It is said that he has sworn an oath that one of these days the château of your fathers shall be his. Be on your guard ; you have a clever man to deal with."

"You take my interests too much to heart, M. Crépin," retorted the baron. "Reassure yourself : M. Têterol will be obliged to resign himself to

necessity, as I intend to die in the château of my ancestors."

V.

M. DE SALIGNEUX made the tour of his domain that very evening before dinner. He descended to the banks of the Limourde, and sat down on the grass near a little bridge, to watch the flow of the water, as he meditated on the policy of Henry IV. and on the useful truths which can sometimes be gathered from the mouth of a rascal. At this point the river formed the boundary between what remained of his hereditary estate and that new empire which had sprung up in a night like a mushroom.

He soon raised his eyes from the reeds of the Limourde to gaze at the rich fields and the well-managed woods which a philosopher had made his prey while a fool was running about the world. As he contemplated these woods and meadows, he passed in review all the errors of his youth; this review was not without its charm, and a smile mingled with the baron's reverie. He recalled a vineyard which he had sold many years before to pay the debts of a pretty blonde, whom he saw very distinctly with her brilliant laugh and golden hair. How handsome it was when she unbound it! And how amusing the woman was, how full of odd fancies, above all in the smoky hilarity of a supper! Beyond the vineyard was a meadow planted with fine chestnut-trees; he fancied he could see between their rugged branches an undulating,

swan-like neck, around which he had once flung a pearl necklace : the pearls were splendid, of the finest water, and perhaps that is why the meadow and the chestnut-trees no longer belonged to him. Further on extended a vast field, whose freshly-upturned soil exhaled a vapor which clouded the setting sun. He saw a pink dress and two delicious little arched feet, as light as the wings of a zephyr, trip across the rich, shining furrows. They were the feet of a celebrated ballet-dancer whom he had had the imprudence to love, and who understood not only how to make her own crowns dance, but also those of other people. Further on still, in the mysterious depths of an oak-grove, where the cuckoo was twittering, appeared to him two dazzling, incomparable, bare shoulders. They belonged to a woman of the world, whose conquest had caused him great financial embarrassments ; for this woman had a great many scruples, and she sold them at retail, and very dear. So the oak-grove no longer belonged to him ; but, after all, he regretted nothing. He remembered how, one evening when his patience was nearly at an end, and he spoke of committing suicide, she had said to him, in an agitated voice, "Come again to-morrow !" and that the next day, the 5th of February, 1868, at the very instant when the clock of Saint Clotilde had finished striking midnight

The half smile which played on his lips suddenly vanished, and the light, fluttering shadows, the pleasing phantoms which he had evoked, disappeared in a twinkling. Great walls of a staring white struck his

eyes—ugly, irritating, disgusting walls, as bright as they were white, and as broad as they were high. There was something insolent and odious in these brand-new walls and the roof which covered them. They seemed to spread themselves out, to strut, to obtrude themselves : they evidently tried to occupy as much space as possible, and to leave none to any one else, like those dolts at a play who take their pleasure in disturbing their neighbors, and preventing them from seeing anything. It seemed to the Baron de Saligneux that M. Têterol's house or barracks had a face, and that that face needed slapping.

As he gave himself up to these sorrowful thoughts, he stroked his beard. Having raised it to a level with his eyes, he thought he discovered a long silver thread. Yes, it was a white hair, the first. He pulled it out promptly, but the blow had told ; he experienced a shock, and in ten minutes had reflected more than in all his life before. He had had a great-uncle, who, after having run through his property, had finished his days in the cassock of a Trappist : he also made an ideal trip to La Trappe, and brought back a humiliated and contrite heart. He administered discipline to himself, he examined his conscience, which told him cruel truths ; he promised himself solemnly to amend his ways, to restrain his tastes and his temper, to renounce Satan and all his works. He resolved not to quit Saligneux again ; to wall himself up in his Thebald ; to live economically, on a low diet of the fruits of his garden ; to be his own steward ; to bend his attention to preserving the remains of his patrimony, by work-

ing his land and regulating the accounts with his farmers in person. His sister, the Countess de Juines, had become a widow a short time previous, and was living alone, as her son was in the navy. She had often reproached the baron unsparingly for his lack of order and his dissipation. She detested fast men, and with reason ; she had been obliged to sacrifice a portion of her dowry to her husband's creditors, for it was the fate of the Saligneux to devour or be devoured. The baron did not enjoy her society much, nor her character, which was rough and crabbed. He did not hesitate, however, to decide that she should live with him ; that she would bring to Saligneux her morose wisdom and her modest income ; that she would serve as duenna to Mlle. Claire, whom it was time to withdraw from the convent ; and that she would teach her all the severe virtues which become girls who have no dowry. In short, he took an oath that he would henceforth live the regular, irreproachable life of an honest country-gentleman, of a gentleman-farmer, of a wise and good father of a family. He swore it by all his creditors ; he swore it by the floating locks of a pretty blonde, and by two little feet whose pirouettes had turned his head ; he swore it also by a field of wheat, by a meadow planted with chestnut-trees, by an oak-grove, and above all, by M. Jean Têterol's great and dividing walls, not forgetting his terrace walls, his underpinning, the boundary walls, nor the red-brick walls of his barns and stables. Never was an oath more solemn, and never were so many stones conjured to witness it.

While M. de Saligneux was making an examination of his conscience, M. Têterol was making one more examination of his good fortune, which he loved to review. According to his daily habit, he had just begun a tour of inspection throughout the whole extent of his property. He went along with his holly stick in his hand, his head very upright, sometimes winking, sometimes smiling slightly, paying attention to everything—to his roads as well as to his culverts, to his manure and his carts. He made sure that his fruit-trees were healthy, and that his vines would flower without dropping their fruit ; he questioned his farmers about their last calf, or imparted to them receipts against blight ; he lectured his laborers who were engaged in turning up waste ground, in a jeering or angry tone. From time to time he interrupted his harangues in order to draw a long breath of the air which belonged to him, and which seemed to him delicious, or to gaze at the sun, which also belonged to him, and which he reproached for setting too soon ; or he stooped to pick up a big clod of earth, which he rubbed in his hands, pulled to pieces lovingly, as he devoured it with his eyes, talked to it, smelt it, and nearly ate it. The earth was his dancer, his woman of the world, and he adored his mistress, but he made her obey him ; she must not stumble in his presence.

There is no perfect felicity in this world. M. Têterol had pursued his promenade to the bank of the Limourde, whose course he ascended until he was stopped by an open fence which bounded a sand-pit. This fence irritated him, and this sand-pit did him the great

wrong of not belonging to him. Although he owned a whole farm on the left bank of the brook, he could not forgive M. de Saligneux for possessing a few inches of land on the right bank. That sand-pit encroached on him ; it trespassed on one of his fields ; it jutted out like a corner ; it disfigured his estate. He was resolved that it should fall into his hands some day ; in the mean time he regarded it as the Kings of Prussia used to regard Hanover ; like the Kings of Prussia, he held to the great principle of continuity of territory. As we have said, he had his moments of candor, like all truly strong men. In order to be strong a man must be convinced ; and in order to have convictions a man must be somewhat naïf. M. Têterol had a sincere and lively conviction that he had a right to that sand-pit, and that M. de Saligneux used him ill in keeping it ; that the baron was laying violent hands on his property ; that the baron was the invading, and Jean Têterol the invaded, party. He turned the corner of the fence with a peevish air, scraping the end of his cane against the rails with a good deal of noise, and growling in a subdued tone like an angry dog. "When will this man cease to have a footing on my territory?" he thought. He arrived at a little stone bridge with a single arch, which, clearing the Limourde without difficulty in one bound, afforded a means of communication between the baron's park and his sand-pit. On turning his eyes to the right he perceived M. de Saligneux. The latter rose at the approach of the enemy.

M. Têterol hastened to remove his hat, as he ex-

claimed : "It is really you, M. le Baron. I am too happy to have the pleasure and honor of seeing you again."

"The honor and pleasure are on my side," replied M. de Saligneux, bowing rather shortly. "I am enchanted, M. Têterol, to find you in good health. You have prospered during my absence."

"Oh ! bon Dieu, we have made a shift to live after a fashion."

"Very well, I should say. Plague ! I hear fine things about you. Your ambition has grown during the last eighteen months, and your hermitage is enlarged prodigiously."

"Don't mention it, M. le Baron," returned M. Têterol, modestly. "I have committed a folly which I repent of every day. God knows that a little cottage and a little garden would have satisfied me. The occasion presented itself, and here you find me extremely embarrassed by all the land with which I have burdened myself."

"All annexationists say the same thing. They are always embarrassed with what they take ; they know not what to do with it, but they take good care not to get rid of it. M. Têterol, I used to think you were a great philosopher ; but, if I believe all they tell me, you are a great politician."

"Do not ridicule me, M. le Baron. Politics ! Oh ! politics do not concern me. I never could see through them ; they are far too complicated for a common man like me."

While speaking thus, M. Têterol had taken several

steps in advance ; M. de Saligneux did the same, and the two men met in the middle of the bridge. They examined each other for a moment in silence. M. Têterol observed that the baron's eyes were sunken and surrounded by dark circles, that his cheeks were hollow. "Poor fellow," he thought ; "he is breaking up ; there is not much of him left." On his side M. de Saligneux was astonished to think that he could ever have taken the thick-set little man before him for a philosopher. He contemplated, with an admiration mingled with uneasiness, his enormous eyebrows ; a vertical wrinkle which crossed his forehead ; his gray eyes, which revealed a devilishly strong will ; his crafty smile ; his thirty-two teeth, so admirably preserved, which were pointed like those of a shark—far less agreeable to look at than those of some little ladies, and quite as destructive. "Bah ! I will appeal," he said to himself.

"Let me just ask you, M. le Baron, what good would politics do me ?" resumed M. Têterol, coming back to his argument ; for he was fond of returning to his sheep, which sometimes turned out to be foxes. "I am a very straightforward man, and I only like people who are straightforward like myself. We must leave *finesse* to those who covet the property of others. Eh ! bon Dieu ! I require so little to make me happy. And I am, above all things, a man of peace. I have a horror of pettifogging tricks, of lawsuits, of bickerings, of discussions. The one thing which made me hesitate about becoming a landed proprietor was the proverb, 'He who has land has war.' If I were to be

at war with any one, I should soon sell my house, and leave to others the propping of my peas and beans ; I would rather buy them in the market. Oh ! peace is the chief of good things, and I intend to live in harmony with all the world ; even if it injured my interests, I should still think I had made a good bargain. Why, then, have I come to pitch my tent on the banks of the Limourde ? Because I was sure of finding there a good neighbor ; one who was as accommodating, as pacific as myself ; one with whom I should never exchange high words. Unfortunately, my neighbor sometimes absents himself."

"You are a thousand times too good, M. Têterol. I must inform you that I shall never again cause you chagrin by absenting myself from the green banks of the Limourde. I have formed the firm resolution not to leave Saligneux again, but to settle here for good. Like yourself, I am utterly disgusted with Paris ; and, like you, I wish to taste rustic pleasures. Rejoice, for your neighbor will never more reside abroad."

M. Têterol looked askance at the baron, and wondered if he were in earnest. He was soon reassured, and said to him, *in petto*, "My fine friend, I do not believe in your plans of reform. You will die in the skin of a fool." Then he exclaimed, "Do you know, M. le Baron, that it is rather imprudent for both of us to stand in the centre of this bridge ? I am rather heavy, and it is not at all solid."

"Really ?" said M. de Saligneux.

"It is a miracle that the Limourde has not carried

it away, and I never see a cart-load of sand pass over it without expecting an accident." Thereupon he artfully demonstrated to him that this bridge was held by neither bolt nor nail; that it was falling away; that there could be no question of repairing it; that it would have to be entirely rebuilt, and that it would cost a great deal to do it.

"We will rebuild it, if necessary," replied M. de Saligneux.

"There might, however, be another solution to the problem."

"What is that?"

"Do you care particularly for that wretched sand-pit?"

"A great deal, my dear sir. Ah! I really cannot tell you why. It is probably the effect of certain recollections. Remembrances are so precious! The fact is, that that sand-pit pleases me infinitely."

"A singular taste, M. le Baron. A little while ago I was amusing myself by examining your sand-pit. It is rather clayey. It could not be used for making mortar."

"Well, I do not use it to make mortar. My sand serves simply to improve my walks."

"A horrible color!" went on M. Têterol. "A yellow verging on green! I have much better to offer you, and I would let you have it at a reasonable price; you shall give me whatever you please for it."

"How obliging you are, M. Têterol! Thanks to you, I shall not have the trouble of rebuilding my bridge, which is falling down. But really my con-

science would reproach me if I were to sell you a pit of clayey sand, of a yellow verging on green."

"It is not that I have set my heart upon it. Believe me, if it were only on the other side of the water, I would not care for it ; but as it is on my land—"

"Your land ? I thought it was on its own. Oh ! I understand ; you have a geometrical eye, and some taste perhaps for the theory of natural boundaries. You are not alone there, for very skillful geometrists are at this moment rearranging the map of Europe, and the sand-pits stand very little chance."

"It is not my own idea," exclaimed M. Têterol, with a modest inclination of his head. "I was talking one day with M. Crépin, your excellent steward, and he proposed to me—he allowed me to hope—he gave me his word—"

"I beg you to understand, M. Têterol," interrupted the baron, "that that excellent M. Crépin is no longer my steward, and that his word, which is not worth much, binds no one but himself. Nevertheless, your proposition deserves consideration ; I shall consider it. I should be charmed to do what is agreeable to you."

"Without being disagreeable to yourself, M. le Baron."

"Eh ! yes, my dear neighbor, a good bargain always makes two people happy, and it would afford me great pleasure to inaugurate in this manner our good relations, to which I attach great value. But I hear my dinner-bell summoning me. *Au revoir*, M. Têterol."

Thereupon the two good neighbors saluted and separated, each charmed with the other. "The fish nibbled immediately ; that sand-pit is mine," thought M. Têterol. "Ah ! my good fellow," said M. de Saligneux in an undertone, "you covet my sand-pit, and you utter deep sighs before the fence which guards it, like a Spanish lover before the grating which separates him from his lady ! That is well ; I know your tender spot, and I shall allow myself the pleasure of thwarting you."

Age and fortune alter people. During the hard years of his youth, M. Têterol had shown admirable patience : he was in no hurry ; he awaited his opportunity ; he knew that "all things come in time to those who know how to wait ;" he never plucked the grape before it was ripe. Since he had made his fortune, he had become less the master of his passions, and passion is always impatient. A fortnight afterward he met the baron at one end of the village, as he was coming out of the parsonage. He addressed him, and could not refrain from mentioning the sand-pit. M. de Saligneux was too intelligent not to do justice to himself ; he was not ignorant of his defects, and he profited by them on occasion. He often forgot ; sometimes he pretended to have forgotten. He opened his eyes wide at M. Têterol's first words ; then exclaimed at them : "What ? What was it all about ? On his conscience he had never even dreamt of selling his sand-pit, and he was a thousand leagues from suspecting that M. Têterol had any desire to buy it." That big man had to submit to the

annoyance of beginning the whole story over again, and presenting his explanations *ab ovo*.

"Ah! I see," said the baron; "my cursed fence annoys you. I am sorry; but, however great a man may be, M. Têterol, he always has a neighbor, and a neighbor is always inconvenient, no matter how good he may be. And, stay, may I tell you that your house annoys me infinitely? But I have tried to make up my mind to endure it."

"My house annoys you?" cried M. Têterol, feigning profound surprise in his turn.

"I had formerly a fine view of the plain. You have walled me in."

"Believe me, M. le Baron, if I had suspected— But I cannot demolish my house."

"God forbid!" replied M. de Saligneux; and, bending toward his ear, he added, "Between us two now, M. Têterol, did my steward cost you very much?"

M. Têterol started back. "What do you take me for?" he replied, indignantly. "Suspect me of having bought M. Crépin! I would have you to know that I have never bought any one."

"I am sure no one ever succeeded in buying you. You belong, M. Têterol, to the race of incorruptible corrupters: it is a fine profession. Oh! do not get angry, but shake hands. I do not refuse to sell you my sand-pit. Only give me time to reflect. You shall hear from me soon. I will see you shortly, my dear neighbor."

Once more M. Têterol thought he had won his

point, that the sand-pit was his. Alas ! he, spent more than six months in believing and disbelieving. During the whole of the summer and the whole of the autumn M. de Saligneux amused himself royally by keeping him on the rack and prolonging his torture. M. Têterol wrote to him every week ; the replies which he received sometimes rekindled his hopes, sometimes reduced him to despair. One day the business was nearly settled ; nothing remained to be done but to sign the deed : the next day nothing was done ; the wind had changed ; the baron had changed his mind ; he could not resolve to separate himself from the sand-pit of his ancestors. M. Têterol was wasting away, visibly worn out. That wretched sand-pit had become his fixed idea ; he was fairly possessed by it : resistance irritated his desire, and he coveted it passionately, furiously ; he had sworn that he would have it ; his life was at stake. His fields, his house, his millions, were nothing to him, so long as that open-work fence, which he abhorred, remained standing and setting him at defiance. He had no other subject of conversation ; he repeated the story over and over again ; he bored the passers-by with it. As far off as they could see him in the village, people nudged each other and said, "Now we shall hear all about the sand-pit ; run !"

He talked to the Abbé Miraud in particular about it. He went, all flaming and on fire with the subject, to pass long evenings at the parsonage ; he poured out his chagrins and his bile into the breast of the good curé, who could do nothing, and who would

have been glad to pronounce him in the right, if he could have done so without thereby putting M. de Saligneux in the wrong.

"That is just like your gentry!" cried M. Têterol; "and, no offense, he belongs to you. He is one of your sheep, and I congratulate you on him. I pass for not believing in anything, but I keep my word. These people do not. They make two, four, twenty promises. They say yes, they say no, and pass from black to white three times in the same day. And that is honor, they think! Your baron is a pretty sparrow. Not to mention—a thousand thunders!—that his sand is clayey."

"If it is clayey, why are you so bent on having it?" replied the curé, timidly, turning aside his head, as though to avoid the storm.

"I am bent on it, I am bent on it! Ah, indeed, who told you that I am bent on having it? But I do not like to be laughed at, to be ridiculed, to be taken for a puppet! So much for your country squires, your lordlings! You have pretty sheep, M. le Curé. But monsieur is a baron—do you hear?—a baron, a real baron! Eh! why don't you take him to serve you at mass?"

And for hours together he would jeer at the nobility and the church to the lively chagrin of the Abbé Miraud, who thought he was making a mountain of a mole-hill.

One day a rumor spread throughout the whole commune of Saligneux. It was said that M. Têterol had had a violent altercation with one of his peasant

neighbors, named Simoneau, about some insignificant trifle. Insulting words had been exchanged, assault and battery was even hinted at, and the paltry dispute was to end in a lawsuit. The news reached M. de Saligneux, who, on meeting M. Têterol again the next day, accosted him with a smile on his lips, saying :

"*A propos*, my dear neighbor, what has taken place between you and Simoneau? They say you have quarreled."

"They say so many things," muttered M. Têterol, with the air of a man who is vexed at being addressed on a disagreeable topic, and who desires to break off the conversation.

And he pursued his way forthwith, leaving the baron convinced that rumor had not lied.

M. de Saligneux desired nothing better than to sell his sand-pit; he had another which answered all his purposes; but he would not for the world have done anything which could please his dear neighbor, nor have missed an opportunity of causing him a mortal chagrin. He thought he had found a chance. He had Simoneau summoned, and delicately insinuated that the best vengeance he could take on M. Têterol would be to buy the sand-pit, which jutted into the field of that crabbed person.

Simoneau seemed pleased with this suggestion; nevertheless, he declined, objecting that he had not the money at his disposal. The baron insisted, reduced by half the price which he had agreed upon with M. Têterol, and offered the easiest terms of payment. In

short, the bargain was struck. Three days afterward M. de Saligneux rubbed his hands with joy : his eyes rested on a deed in strict form, showing that the sand-pit had become the property of Simoneau, and that M. Têterol would have the double displeasure of being forever frustrated in his hopes, and of seeing an enemy installed on his land.

The baron's joy did not last long : he soon learned that Simoneau was on the best of terms with M. Têterol, and that, in consideration of the sum of one thousand francs, he had handed the sand-pit over to him. The baron's discomfiture was great ; but his character was so well balanced that he soon consoled himself. "Let him have the first trick," he said to himself ; "I will have the second."

He related the whole affair to his daughter in a very pleasant letter, to which Mlle. de Saligneux replied by two lines from *La Fontaine*, which she took the trouble to write in fine capitals :

"He who seeks to dupe others, as Merlin says,
Is often duped himself."

She added : "Dear father, be consoled. From what you say, the man is crafty but hasty ; he will be caught in the end."

"Singular creature, my daughter !" thought the baron. "She is at the same time childish and very precocious ; and while she is not twenty years old she is thirty. I shall have to see about marrying her before long. How old will she be on that day ?"

VI.

THE treaty of peace between the Château de Saligneux and the White House had been infringed. Some time was passed in watching each other, in lying in wait. War soon broke out, a war of bickerings and skirmishes preliminary to pitched battles. Everything is a matter of dispute between neighbors who dislike each other. They wanted pretexts, and the farm which M. Têterol owned beyond the brook furnished one. One day he would dispatch to M. de Saligneux a farm-hand in fustian jacket and wooden shoes, to complain of one of his forest-trees, whose principal limb protruded too far, and to intimate to him that he must cut it off without delay ; or to communicate to him, in a boorish tone, an order to close up a window of ground glass in a boundary wall. Another day the baron would send to M. Têterol a tall lacquey, laced and gloved, the bearer of a note, which requested him in polite but concise terms to attend at once to a ditch which infected the air. Messages followed messages, expresses expresses ; the quarrel became more deadly, the remonstrances more bitter. One said, "My tree is where it should be, and I will not cut it down." The other wrote, "I regret that my ditch does not smell of orange-flowers, but I shall not attend to it until I see fit to do so." The frightful discord threatened to make mischief, and already resembled the hissing of snakes. A leaden cloud

covered the sky, and a tempest was hidden in its folds; it was evident that it would soon open, and that there would ensue a torrent of lawsuits—reams of stamped paper, summonses, subpœnas, writs, and sheriffs.

As the masters fought, so did the men. Plough-boys, day-laborers, keepers, and farmers, all espoused the quarrel of their patrons; the very animals put in their word. M. Téterol had purchased a dog with a short nose, massive jaws, and black, pendent lips, which was said to bear a strong resemblance to him. The château was guarded by a large Danish dog, white spotted with black, slender and elegant, but as well provided with muscles as the baron himself. One evening the two hounds met. The engagement was warm and long disputed, and the victory indecisive. The combatants retired with bleeding ears, in bad condition, occupied with licking their wounds, and resolved not to try it again. Henceforth they generally contented themselves with barking at each other from opposite sides of the river: they showed their teeth, scanned each other, measured each other with their eyes, devoured each other with their glances, and strangled each other in imagination. They were sometimes seen to set out with the swiftness of an arrow, uttering frightful howls; one ascended the right bank of the Limourde, the other the left, with the air of hunting for a bridge which would enable them to meet and devour each other; but they took good care to look for it where it did not exist.

It is asserted that in the silence of the night, under

the light of the stars, the manors themselves exchanged defiance, insults, and heavy, threatening gestures. The gray walls apostrophized the white walls, and the white walls retorted. The towers of the château, which were dressed from head to foot in tufted ivy, in which the moon scattered countless pearls and diamonds, cried to M. Téterol's grinning chimneys : " We were built by the hand of an artist for the delectation of delicate eyes. We have beauty, grace, contour, the sacred mystery of form. Dieu ! how ugly you are, and what an absurdly *bourgeois* air you have ! " To which the chimneys responded, waving their arms and shaking their immense funnels : " We were built by a brave man, who rose early and spent the long day of his life in amassing money. There is a great deal here. Where is yours ? It has wandered into some other pocket ; run after it if you can. " " What is money ? " replied the towers ; " it is the riches of fools. Our recollections are our treasures. When we were born, Louis XII., the father of his people, still reigned ; and we have seen Louise of Savoy with our own eyes ; she walked one day on that terrace, and an inscription bears witness to the fact. We have a past, a history. You will never have one. Eh, bon Dieu ! What is there in common between history and you ? It will never know of your existence, and it is useless for you to beg it to look at you ; it will pass you without seeing you. " The chimneys replied with a grin : " It is possible that we have no recollections, but in return we have no debts ; can you say as much ? It would be to

your interest to forget Louise of Savoy for a while, and to think occasionally of your mortgagees, who often think of you."

The fields and woods formed the audience, and listened to these remarks; the old oaks expressed their opinion of them to the moon. This dispute lasted until the light-footed dawn, with her disheveled hair and short robe, timid, indiscreet, and eternally curious, beaming on the mossy hills, bent down to see what was going on, and, waking the cocks, made them crow with all their might on their roosts. It was the hour when walls, whether old or young, ceased to speak.

M. Têterol sought the society of men only to relate his wrongs and his wrath. During his prosperity he did not want to see any one; he had shut himself up in himself, and his own society was enough for him. Since the sand-pit had become his, he doubted nothing; he considered himself sure of victory in the great battle which he had entered on. So he only went to the village from time to time, and was more sparing of his visits to the parsonage: which state of things the good Abbé Miraud took care not to complain of. Têterol generally passed his evenings alone, and the time did not seem long to him. He played a game of chess in his head; he moved his pawns, his knights, and his castles. Joseph, a young peasant, whom he had turned into his valet-de-chambre, heard him one day exclaim, as he pushed his skull-cap up on his forehead, "Three moves will finish the business; that will be check and mate." He said also, "I will

harass him so that he will depart promptly to his great Babylon, without asking for rest." Again, he said, "To will ! it is nothing to will. The will must have resistance and inspiration. You will soon have used up yours ; mine is as eternal as your God, in whom you pretend to believe."

When weary of talking to himself, being a man of resources, he procured without difficulty a companion suited to his taste. He liked to drink beer before going to bed. After emptying his jug, he would place his elbows on the table, which groaned with their weight, and spend at least twenty minutes in looking at it. He endowed it with a face, a fine mustache, a blonde beard and hair, delicate features, and a smile which, though gracious, was rather faded. He addressed to the jug, which was very much astonished at being turned so suddenly into the Baron de Saligneux, eloquent harangues, which could hardly have been very agreeable to it, accompanying them with winks and frowns, and drumming with his fingers. Then, by way of confusion, he would say to it "There, you great booby, catch that for me if you can !" And with a vigorous fillip he would send the cork flying to the other end of the room, after which he would go to bed happy. The business was settled ; how simple it was !

No one must rely too much on his own good sense, or wish to advance too fast ; if he does he will blunder. M. de Saligneux, who was an ardent sportsman, had a great many rabbits in his woods. It so happened that a number of these rabbits escaped from

their inclosure, made incursions into the neighboring land, and permitted themselves to ravage two or three beds of cabbages planted by M. Têterol. The latter, informed of the havoc, to which he called his keeper as a witness, immediately sent an order to the baron to destroy his burrows and their inhabitants within twenty-four hours. The baron replied politely but summarily, that he should do nothing of the kind.

The next day M. Têterol hastened to Bourg, arrived there before sunrise, and presented himself to a man of law of his acquaintance, whom he caught as he was getting up. He related to him, with exaggerated gestures and great animation, the outrage which had been committed. To hear him, one would have thought that the baron had plotted against him, that he had sworn to render his life unbearable, and to force him to quit Saligneux. There was an understanding between him and his rabbits; at the very least, there existed a criminal connivance between them. The lawyer listened without any signs of disturbance, as he played with his snuffbox. This unruffled placidity and dancing snuffbox deeply displeased M. Têterol. At length he exclaimed, "I congratulate you on your happy disposition, Mr. Attorney; you take things very quietly!"

"That is the proper way to take them, M. Têterol; for, before losing one's temper, it is well to know whether there is any occasion for it. And in the first place we must examine—"

"Examine whom? examine what? My right is evident; it is clearer and more limpid than water."

"Not so limpid as you imagine."

M. Têterol bounded on his chair. "Very good, indeed!" he returned, boiling with rage. "You will make out that my cabbages have eaten the rabbits and owe them damages."

"One moment. I do not question the fact that M. de Saligneux's rabbits have damaged your cabbages, but I am inclined to think—"

"That it was kindness on their part, a delicate attention," interposed M. Têterol. "Eh! just think of it: the rabbits of a baron deign to put themselves out to the extent of honoring with their visit the vegetable garden of a small *bourgeois*, of a former mason, of a serf; and, instead of thanking them, the villain is fool enough to get angry. Let them come then, these rabbits of barons, these barons of rabbits, and I will receive them with open arms. My house is at your service, my friends; devour it, and if the delightful thought of devouring me should enter your minds—"

"That is a thought which will not occur to them, M. Têterol; you are not an easy man to manage. Calm yourself, I beg, and let us examine the matter."

"Well, let us examine it, since that seems to amuse you. You were saying—"

"I say, my dear sir, that our own rights always appear evident to us, but that we must sometimes abate our pretensions. In this case, I recommend to your attention Article 524 of the Code."

"What does that article say? Does it claim that my cabbages belong to M. de Saligneux?"

"It does not mention that. Here is article 524. Listen : 'Any objects placed by a landed proprietor on his land, for the service or improvement of that land, are fixtures.'"

"Let them be fixtures, if that is their idea. I shall not annoy them on that score."

"Nevertheless, the whole case is summed up here. I will continue : 'Thus the animals for purposes of cultivation are fixtures ; also the agricultural implements, seeds given to the farmers or planters who pay in produce, the pigeons belonging to the dove-cotes, the beehives, the fish of the ponds—'"

"Is there much more?" exclaimed M. Téterol, who could no longer contain himself. "What have I to do with your beehives and pigeons? I am talking of rabbits."

"Exactly. The rabbits of a warren are fixtures, just as pigeons and fish are ; whence it follows that he who possesses a warren is also the owner of the rabbits contained therein ; that consequently he is responsible for any ravages they may commit, and bound to make good the damage."

"Well, why did you not say so in the first place? So your Code has common-sense sometimes?"

"Therefore," pursued the man of law, smearing his nose with snuff, "the whole question lies in knowing whether M. de Saligneux's woods are a warren, and whether his rabbits are rabbits belonging to a warren."

"A pretty question ! I tell you that they ate my cabbages !"

"That argument is not convincing."

"Very well ; I did not expect that. And who is to decide whether they are the rabbits of a warren, eh? Parbleu ! we will go in search of these gentlemen ; we will take off our hats to them and say, 'On the honor, on the faith of a rabbit, are you or are you not ?' Upon my word, law is a fine science ! How I regret that I was not taught it ! It would have polished my mind ; but I depend on my son to repair my neglected education."

"Dieu ! how hasty you are, my dear sir ! It is very easy to recognize a warren, for there are always old burrows and buildings constructed expressly for it. I may add that, without exactly making a warren, the owner of a wood sometimes undertakes to attract game there by planting broom, or by other analogous means. In such a case, an action might lie ; but it rests on the plaintiff to prove that the defendant actually attracts the game, and allows it to breed to excess. In fact, you will observe, M. Têterol, it is necessary to establish this very point, although the game belongs only to the man who hunts it, and although the lands situated in the neighborhood of a forest are subject to a certain servitude, to which the holders of such lands are forced to submit, always supposing that the damage does not become too considerable ; for every forest is a natural resort for game, which abounds there, whether attracted or not."

M. Têterol's patience was exhausted. He rose, bent over the lawyer, with startling abruptness took his snuff-box from his hands, deposited it on a table,

and then, seizing him by both arms, shook him vigorously.

"Excuse me," said he ; "I am dull of apprehension. I don't understand one syllable of your distinctions, your servitudes, and your natural resorts. I only know that my cabbages belong to me, that they have been devoured, and I shall soon be devoured myself if I don't put a stop to it. Mr. Attorney, I have never had any liking for phlegmatic people, nor for those who muddle things. When I pay a lawyer, I expect him to think I am in the right, and I also expect him to get angry when I am in a rage. I have done ; here is your snuff-box ; I give it back, and I have the honor to wish you a very good-day."

Thereupon he departed, without stopping to listen to another word, and betook himself to a pettifogger, who, conforming himself to his humor, swore by everything sacred that his case was a valid one, his rights plain ; that he ought not to hesitate about suing, and that he would gain his case without difficulty.

This affair was soon complicated by another. The Limourde, which was usually so tranquil, was subject to sudden rise during the rainy season. At such times it had the appearance and fury of a torrent ; its noisy waters filled its bed and ate away the banks. In the part of its course where it formed the boundary between the heritage of the Saligneux and the domain of the parvenu, it attacked in particular the right bank. It was not like the Doubs, which, according to the adage current in Franche-Comté, "neither gives nor takes." It took from M. Têterol, each

year, a few clods of earth and a few bushes ; it gave the baron, whom it favored with its deposits, a little mud. This iniquity profoundly moved M. Têterol ; he kept a careful account of all the peccadilloes so foolishly committed by the Limourde, and reproached it for them, as he gazed at it with eyes as tender as those of his dog : he accused it of being in the pay of the squire. The thought that M. de Saligneux could gain a few inches of earth from him from year to year fairly gave him a fever. The man who had been so fortunate was fond of making troubles for himself, which seemed to him catastrophes as he pondered over them. He had a tragic imagination, and could not discern the difference between a fly and an elephant.

After a night in which, no doubt, he had had a nightmare, and saw the perfidious Limourde carrying away the White House and depositing it at M. de Saligneux's feet, he could not refrain from writing an insane letter, in which he demanded that the baron should restore to him all the land he had taken. In reply, the baron simply sent him a copy of two articles of the Code, worded as follows : "The alluvium belongs to the owners of the banks of a river. It is the same with the land which the running water forms by insensibly withdrawing from one bank of the river and encroaching on the other. The proprietor of the enlarged banks profits by the alluvium, and the proprietor of the opposite bank cannot claim the land he has lost." M. Têterol did not reply ; but he set to work and built, at the point where his land was espe-

cially threatened by the water, an artificial bank, protected by willows, and intended to throw the current back on the opposite shore. He completed his work by cutting the trees three-quarters through, and bending them over ; the Limourde soon submerged them, and it was easy to suppose that they had fallen by accident. He did still better : taking advantage of a moonless night, he filled the hollows caused by whirlpools with enormous hampers made of osiers, and filled with stones. His argument appeared conclusive to the Limourde, and it immediately espoused the part of the *bourgeois* against the squire. M. de Saligneux had become very observant. Having got wind of something, he suspected that there was some black magic in this occurrence, and he sent his keeper to examine the work. He felt that he had been wronged, cried out against robbery and fraud, and notified M. Têterol to destroy his embankments, and to remove his trees and hampers. M. Têterol refusing to do so, he thought at first of having recourse to a suit, and entered a complaint before a justice of the peace, reserving to himself the right to appeal at need to the civil tribunal. But he changed his mind, and, taking advantage of the laws and decrees which confer administrative authority upon the river police, addressed himself to the prefect, who, after having the state of the ground examined by the surveyors of the department, condemned the invader to leave the Limourde as he found it. M. Têterol did not consider himself vanquished : he appealed to the Council of State, demanding that the decision be annulled, on the

ground of lack of authority, because the prefect, by interpreting Article 556 of the Code, had decided a question of property which could only be carried before the courts.

Nothing was talked of in the country but the great quarrel between the Château de Saligneux and the White House ; it was a great event, and formed the subject of all evening conversations, and every one gave his opinion on the matter. It was difficult to be ignorant of it. M. Téterol had abandoned his solitude, since he was pleased to consider himself in the light of a victim ; he pervaded the village and the highways, feeling the need of lightening his heart by a flow of words and a detailed recital of all the wrongs inflicted on him. He was convinced that his lawsuits were state affairs ; that the whole universe ought to take as much interest in them as he did ; that all honest men considered him in the right ; that those who held themselves neutral were fools, and those who blamed him were knaves. The tax-gatherer and the justice's clerk, the mayor and his assistants, the schoolmaster, and the grave-digger—he buttonholed all to relate the tragic tale of his cabbages and the depredations of the Limourde, as he had formerly related the epic of the sand-pit. His demonstration was prolix ; but there was always something which he did not say, a point which he carefully omitted, and it was often the essential point. He terminated his harangue by representing himself as oppressed, as exposed to the most unjustifiable persecution. He was a poor, good-natured man, who had

retired to the country to spend his days in tranquillity, and to live in peace with his neighbors ; but that arrogant gentleman, the Baron de Saligneux, who had been brought up in all the duplicity of the Church, was moving heaven and earth to force him to leave. He was the lamb, M. de Saligneux was the wolf. "That man desires my death," said he. "What harm have I done him? But I cannot allow him to ruin me."

All the inhabitants of the commune, great or small, rich or poor, took sides, with the exception of the curé, whose only political opinion was that they ought to make up the quarrel. The radical leaders backed up M. Têterol, but there were many among the lesser people who were inclined to favor the baron. M. de Saligneux was much kinder toward the poor than his redoubtable neighbor ; he had the carelessness, the easy temper of a grand seigneur, and was very indulgent to those who trespassed on his land, made holes in his hedges, gleaned in his fields, or gathered dead wood in his park. He reserved his severity for the poachers who interfered with his favorite pastime. M. Têterol paid his laborers better and more punctually ; but he never forgave his farmers a crown or gave them a day's grace. He was implacable toward marauders, instituted proceedings on the slightest infraction of the laws, was forever harping on his rights, and represented the *bourgeois* fashion of holding property in the most rigid acceptance of the term. The supporters of the baron were the most numerous, perhaps, but not one of them would

have dared to maintain to M. Têterol's face that the rigor of his argument lacked anything. Though he was not much beloved, his thick eyebrows were dreaded, and no one doubted but that he would eventually be victorious. The peasants said: "His arms are long enough to reach from here to Paris, and what he has once made up his mind to do, that he will do."

M. Têterol enjoyed so firmly established a reputation for omnipotence that every one felt stupefied when it was announced some months later that the Council of State had rejected his appeal. This blow was as terrible to him as it was unexpected. His son was staying in London, studying English and England, and at the same time preparing to pass his examination for doctor of laws. M. Têterol wrote him a formidable epistle of twelve foolscap pages; he announced his defeat in a style whose sorrowful vehemence would have touched a heart of stone. He informed him that the decision was the most crying and scandalous miscarriage of justice ever recorded in the history of any century. All was over with the principles of '89; feudal service was about to be reëstablished; there were no longer laws, magistrates, government, nor anything else: the lives and property of honest people were menaced, the end of the world had come. "And all this," thought Lionel, "*à propos* of three miserable hampers which he has been obliged to fish up from the bottom of the Limourde." He would have entertained serious apprehensions for the health and reason of his father, on reading this pathetic tale, if he had not known that exaggeration

formed the leading trait of his character, and that it was imperatively necessary for him to agitate himself or others. Anger was a sort of exercise which formed part of his hygiene. This Jupiter Tonans would have died of *ennui* if he had been deprived of his thunder, whose rumbling was to his ears the most delicious of music, and which, after all, had never killed any one.

M. Têterol had not seen the last of his chagrins. The affair of the rabbits had been decided against him, in spite of his lawyer's fine promises; the judge of the court had nonsuited him, and condemned him to pay the costs. He appealed; and this time he emerged from his den to canvass his case; he was incessant in his movements; he moved heaven and earth. It was labor wasted; the court of Lyons confirmed the first judgment, and declared definitively that M. de Saligneux's forest was not a warren. Up to that time M. Têterol had only experienced wordy squabbles, which gain by being related and are solaced by the noise they make. The loss of his suit plunged him into a heavy, sombre, mute despair. He passed nearly three hours, locked up, with closed blinds, half lying on the sofa, with his head bent, his arms hanging down, and feeling utterly overcome by his wretched fate. He no longer believed in himself, in his star; his life seemed to him a dark and wretched road encumbered with fugitives; his combinations, his plans, his dreams, were all deserting him. He seriously entertained the idea of selling the White House; he had suddenly conceived a disgust for his

fields, his forests, and all that beautiful kingdom which he had no right to defend against the insults of the Limourde, against the voracious teeth of insolent rabbits, who were so shameless as to maintain that they were not warren rabbits. He ended by exclaiming, "Oh! to strangle a judge and die!" The sound of his voice aroused him from his torpor; he was ashamed of his weakness; he called to his assistance his all-powerful will, and the next moment he was on his feet.

He broke through his seclusion. When he appeared on the threshold of his door, he had so ferocious an air that his servants prudently fled. He descended to the court-yard. Two young fellows who were busy cutting up logs and binding fagots did not hear him coming. One of the foolish fellows exclaimed, "He is humbled." At that same moment a large, solid hand descended on him like lightning, although it did not fall from the sky, and the frightful blow which he received on the head took away all desire to laugh for many a day.

Somewhat relieved by this punishment, in which he had exerted all the vigor of his fist, M. Téterol thought that a walk in the country would make him feel like himself again. He reached the fields, seeking deserted spots and lonely paths. He desired to pass several hours without hearing a human voice or being seen by any one; it seemed to him that solitude, the silence of the woods, would restore him to himself, and that the winds alone could speak to him without uttering something irritating. He walked until evening

with great strides. His melancholy resisted his efforts for a long time. On arriving at the summit of a hill, he encountered a miserable lame horse, which was being led to the knacker's; he caught himself envying its fate. But his blood cooled gradually; the thick cloud which covered his eyes broke, and allowed him to see a strip of the sky, in which twinkled a star; it was his. Unluckily, as he emerged at twilight on a highway which led to the village, he perceived, about fifty paces from him, a horseman in gray, whom he knew, and a young lady with a hat adorned with plumes, whom he had never seen, approaching him, mounted on bay horses. It was the Baron de Saligneux, accompanied by his daughter, who had come to pass a few months at the château. M. Tèterol's fury was rekindled; the bull had seen the red rag. He planted himself in the middle of the road, with his arms folded and his eyes flashing, firmly awaiting the enemy, who advanced slowly, and resolved not yield him passage until he had spoken his mind about his wrongs. In his moments of violent excitement he could not control his tongue; he no longer had words at his command; he stammered. This happened in the present instance. As soon as M. de Saligneux was within reach, he exclaimed in a dull, jerky voice, "M. le Baron, I offer you my congratulations; you are completely triumphant because a prevaricating judge—Your conscience, if you have one—Your woods, your warren—This judgment is an infamy, for—" At last, however, he succeeded in finishing a sentence. Seizing his large head with both hands, he cried, "You

want my head, sir ; here it is ! ” and he had the air of offering it to him.

M. de Saligneux bent over his horse's neck and listened attentively to his broken, incoherent discourse, wondering what would emerge from the chaos. At the last words he carried his hand to his hat, removed it, and bowed ; and this salute was a masterpiece of exquisite grace. Then, making a sign to his daughter, he gave his steed the spur, and set out at an easy trot.

Instead of following him, Mlle. de Saligneux, who had remained in the background up to that moment, pushed straight for M. Têterol, and, throwing up her chin, said to him :

“ M. Têterol, you are enraged, and when a man is angry he does not manage to finish his sentences ; and that is very fortunate, for angry people usually say very foolish things.”

M. Têterol bounded with wrath on receiving this haughty provocation point-blank. He uttered a hoarse cry, stretched out his arm, and in a moment more would have seized Mlle. de Saligneux, dragged her from her horse, and hurled her through the air to land in the dusty highway. But his arm fell before he had touched her ; he felt himself disarmed. She gazed fixedly at him, and her glance had an extraordinary clearness which surprised him. It was the glance of a person who has nothing to conceal, and who knows what she wants. Mlle. de Saligneux was named Claire, and deserved her name ; her head of nineteen was very clear. Add to this that, at that moment,

she felt not the slightest fear ; she had seen the enraged man raise his hand against her, and she had not moved an eyelash. The young girl had a proud, intrepid soul ; she knew by instinct that dangers are sometimes created by fear.

Far from allowing herself to be intimidated by the threatening gesture and flashing eyes of M. Têterol, the longer she looked at him, the more she felt affected by a sort of sympathy for him. Although she had never in her life handled a brush, she had the artistic eye which finds an interest in the forms of things and the faces of people. She fancied she discovered that, after his own fashion, this angry man was handsome ; that he resembled a vanquished Titan. He inspired her with a certain admiration, mingled with a little pity ; and it was in a softened, almost caressing, tone of voice that she said to him :

"Be reasonable, M. Têterol. We must learn to swallow our chagrin. As the poet says, 'A thing once swallowed has no longer any taste.' Life is a game, and we must be brave players. When we are check-mated, we must not break the chess-board over the head of the winner. Everything, my dear sir, goes by luck in this world. You have won the first game and lost the second : you may win the rubber, and then you can give yourself the pleasure of laughing at us. I promise you that I will not lose my temper on that day."

She added, "Come, now, bow to me politely, and I will return it with the most gracious of all the smiles they teach in the convent."

What went on in M. Têterol's soul? Without knowing exactly what he was about, he took off his hat. Mlle. de Saligneux smiled, and giving her horse his head she rejoined her father, who had grown uneasy, and was coming back for her. She soon disappeared, but for long afterward M. Têterol stood motionless in the road, with his mouth open, and fancied that he still saw her. He was in the same state of mind as a royal tiger who has found his master, his tamer, and who wonders by what miracle he has allowed him to leave his clutch alive. This young girl, who had not been afraid of him, and whose glance was so limpid, had cast a spell upon him. Was she ugly or pretty? He had some doubts on the subject, not being an expert in such matters. But he did know that her face was like no other face; that her voice was pure, fine, caroling like the voice of a bird; that no member of her sex, girl or woman, had ever produced upon him an impression at all to be compared with that which he experienced at that moment. The impression was so vivid that it had a really curious effect: veracious historians are bound to mention everything, even when they can give no explanation. As he thought of Mlle. de Saligneux's plumed hat, he felt his heart swell, and he began to weep. Why did he weep? Who can say? He never knew himself. Perhaps the painful emotions of that day had shattered his nerves, had softened and relaxed his fibre: bows which are too tightly strung snap suddenly. The truth is, that the cause of his melting mood was Mlle. Claire de Saligneux, the way she had looked at him,

the peculiar quality of her voice—that silvery voice of youth, which Rousseau never heard without emotion. How great would have been Mlle. de Saligneux's surprise if she had seen Jean Têterol weep !

Several hours later, just as he had emptied his jug of beer, a servant from the château made his appearance. Pale with emotion, fearing he should encounter some insult, some affront, or even that he would be driven out with blows, the poor fellow cursed the disagreeable caprice which had seized his employers to send him on an errand which placed his pantaloons or his life in danger. He brought M. Têterol a note and a basket. The note ran as follows :

“ Mlle. de Saligneux sends to the ogre of the White House one of the horrid wretches who devastated his cabbages, in order that he may execute justice on him by eating him. He is just in fine condition.”

The basket contained a rabbit of exceptional size.

It was decreed that nothing should that day go according to rule. Instead of driving the messenger off, M. Têterol ordered some refreshment to be given him ; instead of tearing up the note, and throwing the fragments in the bearer's face, he read it over three times, and put it away carefully in a drawer. As for the rabbit, he kept that also. To tell the truth, a lingering feeling of distrust caused him to examine the entrails to make sure that they contained neither arsenic nor oxalic acid, nor any suspicious ingredient. The examination proving favorable, he gave orders

that the wretch should be roasted the next day; and while eating it he thought a great deal of Mlle. de Saligneux. From that day forth she was destined to play a leading rôle in his plans, and to form an integral part of his idea. What did he wish to do with her? He did not know exactly yet, but he was coming to it. He more than once pronounced her name aloud when talking to himself, and his eyes flashed and a slight color came into his cheeks. Apparently, he was revolving in his mind a strange, improbable combination, with which he was trying to familiarize his good sense, that insisted on making objections.

VII.

It was early in April, 1875, that M. Téterol took possession at last of the White House. He was not afraid to touch the plaster; he had allowed it time to dry. He had a house-warming in fine style, and gave a banquet to which he invited all the notabilities of the place. The Abbé Miraud held back, and required urging before he would consent to be present; he did not care to commit himself; but M. Téterol assured him that he would find a note for a thousand francs for his poor under his plate, and he silenced his scruples. M. Téterol was a man to be conciliated, and he reckoned on the indulgence of M. de Saligneux. The banquet was very festive, and the guests did honor to it; they ate a great deal and drank in proportion; but

they were reserved in their remarks, and their tongues found some difficulty in their free use. A poet has said, "when the cork flies the wit sparkles." Fifty corks flew toward the ceiling, and the wine of Al sparkled in the glasses, but the wit did not sparkle. The guests put a muffler on their voices, as though the walls had ears, and they were afraid of being indiscreet ; at dessert they were gay, but without noise or enthusiasm. The issue of the two lawsuits was partly responsible for this : people no longer believed in M. Têterol's omnipotence ; his stock had fallen a little, and the baron's had risen. M. Têterol saw what was passing in his guests' minds, let nothing escape him, and took care not to seem affected by it. He had regained all his former confidence in himself. "What fools !" he thought. "Wait a bit, and I will make them change their tune."

Among those invited was M. Crépin, who had been established for the past two years at Bourg, where his small business was prospering. M. Têterol knew better than any one else what M. Crépin was worth, and what use to make of him. A man owes money to the people he buys, but he does not owe them either esteem or regard. He had none for this rather doubtfully honest man. He considered him an intelligent knave, who could on occasion render him fresh service for a consideration ; and we are justified in presuming that he had one to ask of him, for after supper he kept him for the night, promising to send him back to his business by the first train.

M. de Saligneux's ex-steward always reserved to

himself the right of being familiar with the people who hired him, and whom he was trying to work to his profit: he was very familiar, and told them disagreeable truths; it was his way of saving his independence and his dignity. Some fruits remain acid even when rotten: such a fruit was the honorable M. Crépin. The Abbé Miraud having risen to take leave, every one followed his example; and the business agent, being left alone with the host, threw himself unceremoniously into an easy-chair, where he passed several minutes in twirling his thumbs and chewing his toothpick. The ample libations of which he had partaken had somewhat enlivened his pallid complexion; he was none the handsomer for it.

At length he began: "My sincere compliments, M. Têterol. The plague! you have managed things well. You have given us a festival à la Gamache. But do you know what I was thinking about just now? Your guests have drunk your wine and eaten your truffles, but they have evinced no real gratitude. It struck me that they remained to the very end a little cold."

"Really?" exclaimed M. Têterol, pretending to enjoy the sally.

"Did it not strike you in the same light?"

"Eh! yes, I did suspect something. And what do you think was the cause?"

"Well, to speak frankly, I think those two suits which you lost injured you. You must take men as you find them. You formerly accomplished great things, and people gazed at you with open mouths.

A check has been sufficient to make them forget all that, and to-day they see only the spots on the sun. How shall I put it? Your prestige has suffered considerably."

"My prestige! how sad! I beseech you, M. Crépin, give me some good advice; let me share the treasures of wisdom contained in your learned brain. What shall I do to reestablish my prestige?"

"It will be a difficult matter, my dear Têterol," replied the other, thrusting his hands into his pockets. "You are no longer feared, and you cannot flatter yourself that you are beloved. It is not in your line."

M. Têterol glared at him from the corner of his eye: he felt strongly tempted to show this unceremonious person the door, as he lounged there in his arm-chair and treated him like an equal; but he had made it a rule to endure people whom he might possibly need.

"Teach me how to become amiable, Master Crépin," he replied, without anger. "It is an art in which you have taken your degree."

"You had better address yourself to Mlle. de Saligneux. Do you know her?"

"I spoke to her for about two minutes on the highway," answered M. Têterol, with some emotion.

"My dear Têterol, you must know that Mlle. de Saligneux is your most dangerous enemy. She has done you more harm during the three months which she has spent at the château than your two lawsuits put together. They tell me she has been everywhere, talked with everybody, shown everybody her white

hand, and lavished around her smiles and her tricks. She is a regular cat. They all swear by her, and the baron profits by it. The deuce ! you and your millions make a sorry figure to the passers-by. You are not strong enough to contend with that young lady."

"Then I renounce the attempt," returned M. Têterol, humbly.

"My opinion is," continued M. Crépin, "that, if she marries some gentleman of this vicinity, she will soon have him in the Chamber of Deputies. She possesses all the qualities of a perfect electioneering-agent."

M. Têterol seated himself beside M. Crépin, and tapped him on the arm : "She will not marry ; she has no dowry."

"Where would she bestow it ?"

"And no expectations."

"Ah ! yes, she will inherit the money of her great-uncle, the Marquis de Virevielle. He is an old bachelor, who adores her as much as he detests her spend-thrift father."

"Is the marquis rich ?" asked M. Têterol, brusquely.

"If he is, one is forced to believe that he is a miser, a stingy fellow, for he lives in a shabby style in Paris, in a small hotel, between a badly-paved court and a flowerless garden, in company with an old valet, an old housekeeper, and an old dog. The hotel has crevices which he does not trouble himself to mend, and the dog, the housekeeper, the valet, and the marquis are about equally shabby. I know what I am talking

about. The illustrious baron sent me to that dog-hole, once upon a time, to negotiate a loan. I was very badly received, and he almost set the dog on me. I think that if M. de Virevielle leaves his grand-niece an income of fifteen thousand francs it will be a marvel."

"You see!" exclaimed M. Têterol, triumphantly, replying to his own thought.

"What do I see?"

"Nothing whatever," he replied. And, after a moment's reflection, he added: "She has a great deal of good sense."

"Who?"

"Mlle. de Saligneux."

"Do you know, M. Têterol, you seem to take a great interest in that young lady? Do you happen to be in love with her?"

M. Têterol reddened to his very ears, and Heaven knows he only blushed on very great occasions. "Yes, she has a great deal of good sense," he repeated, without being disconcerted; "and it is very natural. When a girl has the misfortune of having a fool for a father, she feels the inconvenience of it, and makes an effort to become sensible."

"Eh! yes, in public, before spectators, *coram populo*; but it is quite another thing when she is alone. Mlle. de Saligneux used to climb trees even after she put on long dresses. One day, when she had climbed into a cherry-tree and was eating cherries, she thought it a fine joke to throw the stones in my face."

"Admirable!" exclaimed M. Têterol, who thought

it a meritorious act, and in the best possible taste, to throw cherry-stones in M. Crépin's villainous face.

"Don't deceive yourself ; she would throw them at you too," retorted M. Crépin, rather piqued. "What are we to her? Vile commoners, whom she despises from the bottom of her soul. She may court popularity through policy, but she is a Saligneux to the very ends of her fingers, in the very marrow of her bones. She is an impertinent minx, who is infatuated with her ancestors, and she counts them over every morning and every evening. You can never get the idea out of her head that man begins with a baron."

"Bah !" answered M. Têterol, still pursuing his idea. "However proud she may be, a sensible girl adapts herself to circumstances ; and when her future is concerned she makes her pride go through very narrow places, and even through the eye of a needle."

"Unless," said the other, "she makes use of her beauty to catch some duke or millionaire marquis."

"M. Crépin, is Mlle. de Saligneux pretty?" asked M. Têterol, with an innocence which was not feigned.

The commercial agent burst into a laugh, and, pinching M. Têterol's arm, he exclaimed : "Here is something odd. You talked to Mlle. de Saligneux for two minutes, and that was sufficient for you to make the discovery that she was sensible ; but you do not know whether she is pretty. Really, M. Têterol, you are a remarkable man."

"Very remarkable," returned M. Têterol, disengaging his arm and dusting his sleeve. Then he began looking at his hands and counting his fingers : as

we have already remarked, he often did this when his brain was busy.

"What are you thinking about?" exclaimed M. Crépin.

"I am thinking," he said, with a start, "of some means to reëstablish my prestige, which, according to you, my dear Crépin, is deeply compromised."

"Like Calchas, your eye is wild, your air sombre, and your hair stands on end. You are plotting something?"

"Perhaps so. Can I depend on you?"

"Oh! as far as that is concerned, no, my dear Têterol," replied M. Crépin, affecting gravity and assuming the air of a Cato. "On the faith of an honest man, I have sworn not to meddle in the smallest degree in any of the little plots which it may please you to set on foot against the poor baron. He is a fine fellow after all, and I feel an interest in him. He has shut himself up in his château for these two years past, and God knows how tired he must be of living there like a veritable anchorite, and trying to put his finances in some sort of order, and to repair the errors of his youth. Virtue must be encouraged. Have a little pity; let this sinner work out his salvation. For my part, his repentance and his austerity touch me, and my conscience would reproach me if I were to disturb his holy practices. No, do not count on me; I will have nothing to do with the affair."

M. Têterol planted himself before him, and stared at him. "Master Crépin," said he, "I know that you sell your scruples very dear, but I have the where-

withal to buy them. I desire some information from you. Zounds! you will be paid."

At these words he took M. Crépin by the arm, as though he feared that his drawing-room was too public a place in which to discuss confidential topics, and led him away to his study, where he remained shut up with him for two hours. He interrogated him in his lowest voice, and the ex-steward replied in the same tone, so that no one ever knew what they said. The only thing certain is, that M. Crépin set out early the next day for Bourg, where he made but a short stay, and that he departed immediately for Paris, although not called thither by any personal business.

Virtue and good intentions are sometimes rewarded. Whatever M. Crépin said about it, the city rat had become a country rat, and did not suffer in his hole. The Baron de Saligneux had acquired a taste for his new life. This man, who had been adored by beautiful women, put on a pair of wooden shoes, and his feet felt comfortable in them. This is a metaphor: it is none the less true that he busied himself in cultivating his land, went to bed early, rose at cock-crow, and reached the end of the day easily, without having lost his temper for a moment. If any prophet had, a few years before, predicted this strange metamorphosis, the baron would certainly have shrugged his shoulders and replied, "It is impossible." Nevertheless, the impossible had come to pass. He lived shut up in his castle, with no other society than his family portraits and the rather crabbed virtues of his sister, the Countess de Juines, with which his daughter's lively graces were

mingled at intervals, without in the least cheering them up. The butterfly fluttered for a few moments around the spiny thorn-bush, which showed its thorns, moralized, and blamed it for its misplaced gayety ; it listened, or pretended to listen, and the next moment had disappeared from sight. A whirlwind had swept away its graces, its brilliant wings, its wild caprices and light thoughts.

Since her departure from the convent, Mlle. de Saligneux had spent her time between her father and her great-uncle, the Marquis de Virevielle, who claimed her as his property, and to whom she was deeply attached. Once in possession of her, he let her go with difficulty, and the baron did not dare to insist too strongly on her return ; however insignificant the inheritance in perspective, they could not afford to despise it. Nevertheless, it pained the baron to part with his daughter ; he thought her charming ; what particularly pleased him was her laugh, which was as fresh and noisy as the cascades of the Limourde. When he was alone with her, he would say, "Now laugh, and make me laugh." She did not require to be urged, and they would laugh for two hours together. Unfortunately, the marquis considered that she belonged to him ; he consented to lend her, but she must be returned. She had just been returned, and M. de Saligneux had been melancholy for half a week, after which he had not thought of her. Natural indifference is a surer remedy for the evils of this world than all the consolations of philosophy. With or without his daughter, M. de Saligneux endured his life

patiently and even sweetly. In truth, when he set out in the morning, clad in a fustian jacket, with a rabbit-skin cap on his head, to superintend the sowing, the harvest or the vintages, and when he traversed his fields with great strides, where he sank down in the earth up to his ankles, and sometimes carried away some of it on the soles of his heavy boots, he occasionally regarded himself with an expression of astonishment. He said to himself, "Is it really you?" He asked himself whether the other, the real baron, was not occupied at that moment in airing his conquering smile on the asphalt of the boulevard ; but his astonishment was mingled with no unhappiness. Let us not grow weary of repeating the fact for the encouragement of repentant sinners, who imagine that conversion is always an austere and painful work—the Baron de Saligneux spent nearly two years without setting foot in Paris, and yet he was not bored. The rat did not talk of leaving his corn and sheaves, nor the monk of discarding his gown.

His labor was not wasted. A short time had been sufficient to assure him that M. Crépin had robbed him in the most shameless manner. He did not try to make him disgorge ; but, having encountered him on a narrow path, it was a satisfaction to him to inform the pilferer that he was a rogue. It is a sort of pleasure which a man has a right to indulge in ; it does not enrich a man, but it relieves his feelings. He applied himself untiringly to the task of bringing his estate back into a good condition. He was intelligent, and he soon understood the felling of trees, the breeding

of cattle, the irrigation of fields, and the best methods of labor. He applied himself particularly to bringing his people back to their duty, and to stopping up the mysterious channels through which the best parts of his rents disappeared. He managed so well that in less than eighteen months the revenues of his estate were nearly doubled.

We once heard a preacher declare that saints, although they may be reduced to the most cruel extremities, are happy because they have the friendship of their conscience. We do not know whether the friendship of his conscience would have sufficed for the happiness of the Baron de Saligneux, and whether he had been so deeply touched by grace as to be contented for long with a perfectly monotonous life. He had not acquired the bucolic temperament on becoming an agriculturist. Luckily M. Têterol had taken it upon himself to furnish the spice with which he needed to season his life. If M. Têterol had not existed, it is probable that M. de Saligneux would not have hesitated long ago to break through his exile; but M. Têterol did exist, and had declared war against him. The baron was in the position of a besieged city: he took a pleasure in defending himself, in exposing the mines of the enemy by countermines, in counteracting his works of approach by vigorous sorties. The fortune of arms was favorable to him, and he privately thanked M. Têterol for the interesting distractions which he had arranged for him, and which were quite new to him.

But one thing disturbed him: since the court of

Lyons had decided that the rabbits were not warren rabbits, M. Têterol had given no sign of life, he had played dead. Hostilities had ceased all along the line ; no more bickering, no more insolent demands. It seemed as if the proprietor of the White House had enjoined on all his people, his gamekeeper, his servants, down to the lowest farm hand, to change their tone and manners ; they had become polite, almost gracious. The frightful dog with the short nose had grown tame ; he no longer showed his teeth, he no longer barked. Was he to conclude that, overcome by his defeat, M. Têterol was disgusted with the business, that he had disarmed and was meditating propositions of peace ? It was difficult for any one who knew him to believe that. When the besieger ceases fire, it sometimes signifies that he is preparing to raise the siege ; it may also signify that he is preparing some unpleasant surprise for the besieged.

M. de Saligneux soon had a much graver subject of uneasiness, which came to him from quite another quarter. It has been said with reason that the present is nothing, that the future does not depend on us, that our past alone belongs to us ; but the question would seem to be whether we do not belong to it. The baron's principal creditors were two petty brokers of slender morality and small reputation. He owed them sufficiently large sums, which his trip across Europe had raised to more than two hundred thousand francs. He paid them the interest of his debt regularly, and resolved to extinguish it by gradual payments, but which he had not been in a condition to make.

Moreover, he thought he had nothing to fear from Messrs. Cobec and Margriffe ; he had always found them easy to deal with, and they never required to be urged to renew his notes. At the moment when he was farthest from thinking about them, two letters reached him, a month apart, which bore a strong resemblance to each other, and in which the two gentlemen informed him that they had got into difficulties, and that, his note having fallen due, they found themselves under the painful necessity of exacting the reimbursement of the whole amount of their claims. These letters caused him a disagreeable surprise ; it was a stroke which made him start. His alarm would have been still greater had he suspected that M. Crépin had set out suddenly for Paris, after a long confidential conversation with M. Têterol. He soon grew tranquil, and wrote to his creditors, insinuating that that he did not believe in their difficulties, and begging them to have a little patience, as it was impossible for him to satisfy them. He received equivocal replies, which seemed to him reassuring ; and he possessed the art of lulling his uneasiness to sleep. Alas ! a man may reform, and kill the old man in him ; but he cannot kill Cobec and Margriffe, and he sees them appear through a trap-door, to torment the converted sinner. It is one of the crying injustices of life.

One fine afternoon in June the Baron de Saligneux was stretched on one of the benches on his terrace, occupied in digesting his frugal breakfast, and smoking a panatella, whose delicate perfume recalled to his mind the pleasantest days of his existence. Yet he felt

no regret. For the first time, his imagination was in accord with his destiny ; it sketched pastoral scenes, and played airs to itself on the shepherd's pipe. Some cows were browsing in a neighboring field, and as their bells tinkled it seemed to the baron that the tinkling was a far more agreeable music to listen to than the most charming operetta. It also seemed to him as if the vast plain which extended before his eyes was more agreeable to look at than the weighing-place at a race, and he decided that the fine elm which shaded his head was of a more beautiful green than the shade of a lamp which affords light to a game of baccarat with two-louis stakes. He was suddenly disturbed in his meditations by a sharp cry : he looked up into the air, and perceived a hawk which had stolen one of his chickens two days previously. He ordered his gun to be brought, loaded it, and waited until the bird came nearer. He was just preparing to take aim, when a footman handed him a letter, the writing on which he instantly recognized ; it was the writing which, of all writings in the world, was the least agreeable to him. He laid aside his gun, and made haste to read the letter, which was brief but emphatic. It ran as follows :

“M. LE BARON : I have the honor to inform you that Messrs. Cobec and Margriffe have transferred their claims upon you to me ; which, as you are aware, amount in round numbers to two hundred and eighteen thousand francs. You are aware also that the dates fixed upon for repayment have passed, one

a week, the other a month ago. I anxiously await any communication which you may have to make to me on the subject. Accept, M. le Baron, the expression of my sentiments of the greatest consideration, with which I have the honor to be, your devoted servant,

“JEAN TETEROL.”

M. de Saligneux felt a shiver run down his back. He read the note twice or thrice. No, his eyes had not deceived him ; the fatal writing resisted all his efforts to make it say anything except what it had already said ; it stuck to its first word, which was also its last. He tore the paper into four pieces : if he had reduced it to fragments it would have done no good ; it is neither with our hands nor our nails that we rid ourselves of an embarrassing truth. The baron bent his head under the decree of destiny which had reached him, and gave himself up to melancholy reflections, trying to account for what had taken place. He speedily divined the share which M. Crépin had had in the event. The hawk which floated above the terrace screamed again ; he looked, but had no longer any desire to fire at it ; this bird of prey was very in-offensive compared with the other.

He saw his sister, the Countess de Juines, in her eternal half-mourning appear at the end of one of the walks. She had dedicated herself to black ever since the death of her husband, whom, nevertheless, she had no cause to regret ; it was, at the most, only on days of high festival that she enlivened her sadness with a

few lilac ribbons. Her mourning happened to be very appropriate on that particular day. The baron approached her, and said that urgent business obliged him to set out for Paris. She questioned him, and he made up a story. She usually took things so hard that, in order to escape her pathetic laments, he had always refrained from informing her as to the state of his affairs, particularly as she was very deaf, and no one likes to shout out his confidential remarks. Moreover, could she be of any assistance to him? She had just married her son to an heiress, and to facilitate a rich match, which flattered her vanity, she had stripped herself; she had barely enough left to live on. M. de Saligneux busied himself with his preparations for departure. Before setting out, he seized a pen and scrawled hastily the four following lines:

“MONSIEUR: I beg you to accord me the delay of a few days. I shall acquit myself of my debt before the end of the week. Accept, monsieur, the expression of all my sentiments of perfect consideration.”

He arrived in Paris the next morning. He abstained from making any appeal to the Marquis de Virevielle; he had applied to him more than once in moments of distress, and the reception he had met with had taken away all desire to renew the attempt. Moreover, Mlle. de Saligneux was staying with the marquis, and he did not wish to see her. He feared her ingenuous but piercing glance: his daughter's eyes frightened him when he had anything to conceal.

He passed several days in going around. The friends on whom he especially depended were absent ; others answered evasively. He went to the money-lenders, whom he had formerly approached with success ; they proved to him that his credit was very much shaken, and he considered the conditions which they proposed to him inadmissible. The most obliging among them placed only very insignificant sums at his disposal : times were bad, money was rare on 'Change. Disappointed in all quarters, he betook himself to his old friend baccarat ; one night he won fifteen hundred louis, and lost them the next. Discouraged by this reverse, not knowing where to turn, he took a great resolution, to resign himself to his fate, to drain the cup of misfortune, and to return to Saligneux.

A few hours after his arrival there, he presented himself at the gate of the White House, on whose walls he fancied he could read the dreadful inscription : *Lasciate ogni speranza*. The painful emotion which agitated him and the cruel sufferings of his dying pride were visible in his countenance ; for M. Téterol's big dog, who had advanced growling to meet him, suddenly crouched at his feet, and gazed at him with an almost paternal eye. In spite of calumny, the animal was susceptible of good feeling. He had scented misfortune ; and, as misfortune seemed to him worthy of respect, he let it pass.

VIII.

M. TÊTEROL found himself at this moment in a very happy frame of mind. He was occupied in reading a letter which he had just received from his old friend the notary Pointal. He swallowed it in small morsels, like a gourmand, as he would have sipped the fine wine of Frontignan—the only wine he cared for.

The letter ran as follows :

“MY DEAR FRIEND : Yesterday I saw Lionel, who starts to-day for a three months' sojourn in Germany, as you had arranged between you. I will not leave this precocious and far too modest young man to announce to you that he has passed his examination for his doctor's degree with remarkable success. It was one of the most brilliant examinations within the memory of the law faculty. Men of note talked of nothing else, and everybody unites in predicting for your son a great career. His success will not create enemies ; he possesses the gift of making himself beloved. My old friend, the new keeper of the seals, took such a fancy to the young man that he wished to make him a member of his cabinet. Lionel would not entertain the proposition. He insists that his education is not finished. He learned English in England, and he wishes to learn German among the Germans ; but he will keep his promise, and at the beginning of September will visit you in the

famous White House, which he has not yet seen. Do you know that you have been dealing with him very artfully? You did not wish to show him the bird until its crest had all its feathers. If I am not mistaken in my calculation, it is three years since you saw Lionel. You will find him somewhat changed, especially rather thin : he works too hard, the sword is using up the scabbard. It will be your task to remodel him, to fatten him ; but, just as he is, he is the handsomest chestnut-haired fellow on earth. I know some ladies who think as I do.

“Do not be uneasy, my dear Têterol ; he will not turn out a lawyer. You have taken a disgust to the profession since you lost your suits, and he will not be anxious to win them. His ideas remain the same as ever ; he intends making a political career for himself, and in the mean time he is unsurpassed in administrative law. He will soon be auditor in the Council of State ; and, his foot once in the stirrup, it will not be long before he vaults into the saddle. What a good and loyal servant France will have ! He has everything in his favor—his lively intelligence, clear, luminous mind, a solid education, precise, well-defined ideas, the most liberal opinions, no prejudices and no intolerance, and a poetical imagination, to crown all. You are a happy father, my dear friend. Do you know the full value of your son, and do you appreciate your good luck ?”

“That Pointal is absurd,” thought M. Têterol. “He pretends to tell me the value of my boy. We

shall see. One of these days he will take it into his head that it was he who made him what he is."

In spite of this fit of ill-humor, he was settling himself to reread the notary's letter, when Joseph, his servant, handed him a card. He had hardly cast his eyes upon it before he started from his chair, exclaiming, "Show him in!" and he was on the point of running to the door to receive his prey, whom he was anxious to see. He mastered his impatience; and, feeling that his eyes sparkled, he endeavored to extinguish the fire of his glance.

M. de Saligneux appeared. He had regained his usual countenance while ascending the stairs; his face had resumed its ordinary expression, an air of haughty indolence which disregarded events, and seemed to say, "Whatever happens, I am a Saligneux." He advanced with an easy swing, as was his wont, a smile on his lips, his head bent on his breast as though to inhale the perfume of a splendid moss-rose which bloomed in his button-hole. M. Têterol was thrown into consternation. "He has found the money," thought he.

The baron suspected what was passing in the heart of his executioner. He remarked in a careless tone, "Be reassured, M. Têterol; I am at your mercy." He added with ironical grace, "You see Themistocles coming to seat himself by the fireside of the great king, or Napoleon I. taking refuge on the Bellerophon."

M. Têterol's face expanded like the rose which decorated the baron's button-hole; his glance and

smile shone with joy. A ray of sunlight which fell obliquely on him made his gray hair scintillate, and formed an aureole around his brow, but it was neither the aureole of a saint nor of a martyr.

He bowed courteously, and said, "M. le Baron, you will not be sent to St. Helena."

Then he led him to the other end of his vast study, gazing complacently on his precious victim, following his every movement with tender solicitude, as though he were afraid he might be broken on the way. He pushed toward him the easiest, softest, most downy of his arm-chairs; and he hardly refrained from placing a pillow behind his head and an embroidered footstool under his feet. He wished his prisoner to be comfortable, perfectly comfortable, and to take a liking to his prison.

M. de Saligneux sat down. His face was turned toward a large arched window, through which he saw a château; he could not help making a sign to it with his head, as much as to say, "How shall we come out of this business?"

M. Têterol installed himself on a modest cane-chair, and, after casting a rapid glance in the direction of the window, said:

"A charming view, M. le Baron. There is the famous wood which is not a warren. There is the river which devours my fields, and which the courts do not permit me to deprive of that pleasure. Between ourselves, justice is a queer thing! And the château, how elegant and coquettish it is! How much like a Saligneux it is, too! Ah! men cannot

build like that nowadays. They only have *bourgeois* architecture now. It is because we live in a terribly *bourgeois* century." The word *bourgeois* filled his mouth ; in pronouncing it, he had as respectful an air toward himself as Louis XIV. when he exclaimed, "I am the State !"

M. de Saligneux interrupted him by a gesture. "Let us talk of business, M. Têterol," said he. "I have come to beg you to renew my notes. You can ask any interest you please."

M. Têterol breathed noisily, closed his right eye, pushed his black-velvet skull-cap to the top of his forehead, and answered, after a pause which to the baron seemed very long :

"I perceive with sorrow, M. le Baron, that you do not know me yet. What do you take me for? For a usurer, I fancy ; many thanks. I beg you to understand that I have always detested all unclean means of gaining money. I made my money by work, and I have always desired that my money should work honestly as I did. I have never intrigued on 'Change : ask M. Pointal. I never have sold on a margin. What is selling on a margin ? It is selling something which one does not own. I have always sold what I owned, and when I bought I never made a bargain of which I need be ashamed. If I were to give you the key of my safe, you would not find a single louis, nor even a ten-sous piece, you understand me, which owns an equivocal history. I was a foundling ; but my money knows its father, and knows that its father has a spotless reputation, and that he can walk in the light of

the sun with uplifted brow. No, M. le Baron, I have never lent out small sums at interest, and I will not begin now. Propose to me something else."

"Take a mortgage on all the property which I have left," responded the baron, in a dry, broken tone.

M. Têterol breathed heavily again, shut his eye, the left one this time, pulled his cap down to his enormous eyebrows, and replied sententiously, "I have never cared for anything but first mortgages."

M. de Saligneux bowed his head under this blow.

"In that case, pay yourself in land; take Saligneux," he said, in a voice weakened by emotion.

"The whole of Saligneux?" exclaimed M. Têterol, opening his mouth to its full extent, as his bulldog might have done when snapping up a mouthful.

"One moment, my dear monsieur. You ought to be aware, you who are so curious and so profoundly versed in my affairs, that in ready money Saligneux is worth more than two hundred thousand francs. There would be a good share for many of you."

M. Têterol remained silent for a minute. "M. le Baron," he responded, "what I am about to say will cause you great surprise. I know that the sale of the château of your ancestors would be a cruel extremity for you, for you would be forced to sell it eventually. What is a château when it has no land about it—no more than a vegetable garden? It is a king without a court, or a general without an army. Listen to me. I do not desire to take Saligneux from you. I certainly have no reason to wish you well. You have

treated me as a Turk would treat a Moor ; you have caused me a thousand annoyances ; you have rendered my life unhappy ; you have made me old before my time ; you have instituted lawsuits against me."

"Ah ! excuse me, M. Têterol, I thought it was you—"

M. Têterol exclaimed, in a voice of thunder, "What, M. le Baron ! You still dare to maintain that your rabbits—"

"Oh ! for the love of Heaven, say no more about it," sighed the baron. "I hate above all things to be bored ; my rabbits shall be whatever you like ; make hares or wild boars of them if you like ; but don't discuss the matter any more."

This unfortunate interruption had affected M. Têterol unfavorably. He took time to calm down, and then went on in a good-humored tone : "I was saying, M. le Baron, that I have no reason to spare you, and that nevertheless I felt disinclined to take Saligneux from you. Do you know why ? Simply because you have a daughter. You open your eyes ? At all events, that is the state of the case. I only saw Mlle. de Saligneux for two minutes. She only said two words to me in passing. But it is enough for me to see people once to love or to detest them ; and it is enough for me to hear the sound of their voices to know what to think of them. Well ! Mlle. de Saligneux pleased me, and the sound of her voice suits me. Now do you know what would happen, M. le Baron, if I were to buy Saligneux of you ? Mon Dieu ! I do not wish to utter a word which could

wound you ; but allow me to speak frankly. There are men, there are hands—in which louis melt as if they were in a crucible ; and there are men—what is it they are called ?—spendthrifts. Well ! one is young, and Paris, its pleasures, its women—in short, if you were to sell Saligneux, in ten months afterward your daughter would be reduced to poverty, and I do not wish your daughter to be reduced to poverty.”

The baron was torn by the most opposite feelings. The remonstrances which M. Têterol had presumed to make to him had appeared to him very impertinent, and he had been on the point of getting angry. His indignation gave way to profound astonishment, when he heard the conclusion of the discourse. What ! his ears had not deceived him, his daughter's charms had succeeded in softening the tough heart of this old rhinoceros ! If an aërolite had fallen at his feet from the sky, or if his château, from which he had never taken his eyes, had set itself in motion suddenly, and danced a wild saraband, his surprise could not have been greater. He turned his eyes from the pepper-box towers, to which he had just mentally bidden a last farewell, and, looking fixedly at M. Têterol, he felt tempted to retort on this presumptuous philanthropist. Still he thought it better to wait a little.

“My dear sir,” said he, “I am very much obliged to you for your kind sentiments with regard to my daughter ; I will mention them to her when I see her, and she will no doubt appreciate them. But as you refuse to renew my notes, or to take a mortgage on

my property, or to pay yourself in land, I must ask, in my turn, What have you to propose?"

M. Têterol rose abruptly and replied, "I have my own idea." And he added, as if speaking to himself, "It is not the old one; it is another, which I think better."

Thereupon he began to pace the room with his heavy step, with his hands in his pockets, and his eyes half-closed. The baron followed him with his eyes, pale, excited, agitated by nervous attacks like a criminal who is waiting for the verdict of the jury; he wondered what could be going on in that big head, whose skull he would have liked to raise, in order to possess its secret at once. But M. Têterol seemed in no haste to explain himself. He continued his heavy walk; it seemed to him as if he were treading under foot not only Baron Patrice, but his father, Baron Adhémar—his grandfather, the keeper of the seals—his great-grandfather—all his ancestors—and that he was crushing and grinding to powder with his elephantine foot the pride of twenty generations of Saligneux; he heard it shrieking under the soles of his boots. Suddenly M. Têterol stopped, leaned his back against the chimney-piece, and according to his custom, after playing with his hands, he joined them in the form of a cup; at the bottom of the cup he saw the interior of a church, an altar on which burned fifty candles, before the altar a nuptial canopy, under the canopy a young girl with dark-brown hair and a young man with a light chestnut mustache. And there were people there who said, "They told me so, but I would

not believe it." There were others who replied, "Ah! he is a famous man, and, when he wills a thing, it comes to pass." The church, the altar, the candles, the canopy, and all those people who conversed, were contained in M. Têterol's two hands. It is true, they were enormous.

At last, his eye filled with the vision, he turned to M. de Saligneux, and exclaimed :

"I don't approve of half-way measures. Are we friends? Are we enemies? One of two things we must have—either war with all its consequences, or peace, and even friendship, founded on a satisfactory treaty. That is my ultimatum."

"And what are the clauses of this treaty?" demanded the baron, panting, his throat oppressed by over-excitement.

M. Têterol hesitated an instant before replying; it was not easy to articulate what he had to say. "M. le Baron," he murmured, "you have a daughter," and added after a pause, stammering a little and blushing deeply, "and I have a son."

At these words M. de Saligneux seemed to execute a somersault in his chair. There are extraordinary events and surprises which catch a man unprepared, however much self-possession he may have. Fortunately M. Têterol did not see this start; being very much agitated himself, he kept his eyes riveted on the floor.

"Your daughter is charming," he resumed, in a voice softer than the sound of the hautbois; "my son is charming also, and he is a young man with a great

future before him. Read what my notary, who is not an ordinary man himself, has written me about him."

And he offered the baron M. Pointal's letter. M. de Saligneux's first impulse was to throw it in M. Têterol's face; his second was to give way to an explosion of gentle gayety. He did neither. He thought of the two hundred thousand francs which he owed, and of his château, which had been given back to him by a miracle. His blood boiled, but he endeavored to calm it. His hands itched; he said to them, "Come, let us not get angry!" And, to tell the truth, men who have had a great deal of experience learn not to lose their tempers. But he could not utter a word. He negligently took from his button-hole the beautiful moss-rose which had adorned it, and gazed at it in silence. The rose understood him; like himself, it considered M. Têterol's proposition unheard of, fabulous, and extravagant, as well as insolent.

M. Têterol grew uneasy at his long silence, and at length said with some bitterness:

"Prejudices, M. le Baron, profit nothing, and sometimes cost very dear. Have I offended you?"

"Offended? Not at all, but I acknowledge that you have surprised me extremely. Believe me, M. Têterol, I am very sensible—yes, I am very sensible of your good-will, and of the advantages of the alliance which you propose; but—"

"Do not say 'but,'" interposed M. Têterol, quickly, regaining all his assurance. "You have not had time

yet to consider thoroughly all the advantages. And, in the first place, with regard to your little debt, we will settle that amicably in private, and you will find me the most accommodating of men. Then consider your daughter. No dowry, no expectations. What will you do with the poor child? If any marquis should consent to marry her for her beauty, he would turn out a booby or a sportsman, incapable of giving her the kind of life which she deserves. And then you do not know what sacrifices I shall make, what follies I shall commit for my son. He is the marrow of my bones, the blood of my veins, my idol. I call him my Prince of Wales. I long ago made up my mind that I would give him a million when he married: think of it—a million in cash! Ah! M. le Baron, what an example we should give to our country! And we ought to do something for our country. There has been proclaimed equality in the sight of the law; but different classes detest each other, are jealous of each other. France is full of men like me, who look askance at barons, and of barons who say to them, 'Stand out of my light!' Yes, the conflict between the Têterols and the Savigneux is the scourge of France; everywhere is heard the noise of wooden shoes advancing, and of varnished boots retiring. Eh! good God, are there not room and sun for all? All that needs to be done is to come to an understanding and intermarry. M. le Baron, let us unite old France to new France. In this canton there are several hundred imbeciles who have foolishly espoused our quarrel without knowing why. Some regard you as a scoun-

drel, the rest look on me as a bully. If our children should one day traverse the principal street of Saligneux arm-in-arm—you see the picture?—all the idiots, being unable to comprehend it, would look at them open-mouthed; and I put it to you, M. le Baron, is it not a pleasure to intelligent people to make fools gape?"

After this fashion did Jean Têterol discourse, and he discoursed a long time. Having cleared the first barrier, and having found the field free, he hesitated no longer; he hastened forward, and gave free reins to his tongue. He painted in a few bold strokes the happy revolution which the marriage of M. Lionel Têterol and Mlle. Claire de Saligneux would effect not only in the affairs of the Baron de Saligneux, but also in those of the universe in general. The Golden Age would return on earth; streams of milk would flood the country; the Limourde would bear pearls and rubies on its breast; the lamb would feed with the wolf; Astrea would resume the government of the world; everywhere would be peace, happiness, and abundance.

The baron, sitting with his hand clinched on the arm of his chair, had made ten efforts to rise, yet he still remained seated. Ten times he had tried to leave the place, but he was still there. He had tried to stop his ears, and yet he did not cease to hear, and even to listen attentively.

"M. Têterol," he exclaimed at length, "I so little expected, when I came here, such propositions as you have just made to me, that you must not take it in

ill part if I find some difficulty in gathering my wits together. I should really be charmed to reconcile old and new France. But be so good as to recollect that our children have never seen each other. Who can be sure that my daughter will be agreeable to your son?"

This question seemed so absurd to M. Têterol that he could not restrain a burst of laughter.

"Ah! what did you say, M. le Baron?" he replied. "I think I must be dreaming. What! my son would presume— But I believe I own my son, and he will always do whatever I desire. I will say to him before he sees Mlle. de Saligneux, 'I wish that she shall please you,' and, zounds! she will please him."

"I congratulate you, M. Têterol, on the excellent education you have given to your son," returned the baron. "For my part, I must confess that I have not as yet brought my daughter to such a pitch of perfection that I should think of forcing her taste."

"Ah! very well. She is very difficult to suit," interrupted M. Têterol, "if she can find any fault with my Prince of Wales. But you have not read Pointal's letter yet. Where is the letter? Here, a few lines before the end— What does he say? 'He is the handsomest chestnut-haired young fellow in the world. I know some ladies who think as I do.' You see? But how stupid I am! I can show you my Prince of Wales."

And he took from one of the drawers in his desk a photograph, which he handed to the baron. The latter looked at it and nodded approvingly, as though

he had been examining a faultless saddle-horse, or a Roussillon ram with fine, thick fleece. He could not avoid acknowledging to himself that M. Jean Têterol's heir was a charming fellow, whose face, at once gentle and grave, open and meditative, commanded instant sympathy; and that he bore no more resemblance to his father than an elegant birch of the finest species does to an old elm which has grown in hard soil, beside a dusty road, at the mercy of the passers-by. If the Baron de Saligneux represented old France, if Jean Têterol represented new France, his son probably belonged to a third and still newer France, which possessed the secrets of the future.

In the mean while, M. Têterol had opened a second drawer of his desk, from which he took two papers, which he had drawn up roughly at his leisure. One was the sketch of a deed by which M. de Saligneux acknowledged that he owed him a sum of two hundred and eighteen thousand five hundred and twenty-four francs, bearing five per cent. interest, the repayment of which could not be demanded before the expiration of four full years. The other was a counter-deed posterior in date, and drawn up in these terms:

"In consequence of arrangements entered into between the Baron Patrice de Saligneux and M. Jean Têterol, the Baron de Saligneux, having agreed to give his daughter, Mlle. Claire de Saligneux, in marriage to M. Lionel Têterol, son of the aforesaid Jean Têterol, binds himself, in case he should withdraw his word, through any act of his own, or through a refusal on

the part of his daughter, to repay M. Têterol, within a week of his renunciation and the rupture of the projected marriage, the whole sum of two hundred and eighteen thousand five hundred and twenty-four francs, which he confesses to owing him in the accompanying document, that is annulled by the present deed on the above understanding.

M. Têterol handed the two draughts to the baron, remarking, as he did so, "Look and decide. Here is an acknowledgment which I beg you to copy and sign. I will witness it and countersign it."

M. de Saligneux read and appeared very well satisfied; a delay of four years was an eternity to him. "If you like," he said gayly, "I will make two copies, for it is a contract stipulating reciprocal obligations, and reciprocal contracts with private signature ought to be drawn up in duplicate. If it is true, M. Têterol, that I have made you old before your time, it is still more true that you have forced me to study the Code, which ages one in another way. But what is this second paper?"

"A counter-deed, which must be written by your hand, and remain with me."

The second paper pleased the baron far less than the first: it was a dish which did not suit him. He made a very expressive grimace, and sank back in his chair. "Do you know, M. Têterol, that you are prodigiously prompt in business affairs? Grant me forty-eight hours for reflection."

"At your leisure, M. le Baron; take the papers," replied M. Têterol, with a rather bantering smile.

"But, if I were in your place, I should decide immediately. Once Mlle. de Saligneux made a remark to me in her pretty voice, which has clung to my memory, and here it is : 'A thing once swallowed has no longer any taste.' Eh ! now I ask you, when the sun has risen and set twice more on your indecision, what change will have come over the world ? None. The day after to-morrow, when you wake up and open your shutters, the first thing you will see will be old Têterol walking in his garden, and you will say to yourself, 'He is waiting for my answer.' It will be an unpleasant moment for you, and I advise you to spare yourself ; for, however desirous I am to please you, I cannot conceal from you the fact that I shall still be alive at the expiration of forty-eight hours. My chest is sound," he added, striking his breast, "and I do not suppose you would have me made away with."

"God forbid !" returned the baron, graciously. "My dear sir, you are one of the most original men I have ever known—a real specimen ; and I should be in despair if the race were extinguished."

Thereupon he meditated for a few moments ; he was arguing with himself. The conclusion of his argument was, that he told himself that, when a man has employed the first half of his life in committing follies, he must consecrate the other half to being politic.

He sat up straight, took the pen, copied and signed all that was required of him. His task accomplished, he examined the tips of his fingers to make sure that

none of M. Têterol's villainous ink had stained them, and rose to take his departure.

"M. le Baron," said M. Têterol, no longer banteringly, "a deed with private signature has the same force as an authenticated deed. Although Pointal is my best friend, I have never been able to endure to have him thrust his nose into my affairs, except in cases of urgent necessity. If you please we will do without a notary. Those gentry have a rage for quibbling, criticising, and putting in their word on every occasion. You are a gentleman—my name is Têterol. We are honest folk, and our signatures are worth their weight in gold."

As he said this, he offered his hand to M. de Saligneux, who could not do otherwise than take it and press it. M. Têterol accompanied him as far as his gate, paying him the most profound attention. The house-servants who saw them pass divined that something important must have occurred. M. Têterol was stately and radiant. His nostrils expanded, and as he drew a deep breath he seemed to absorb all the circumambient air, leaving none for the baron or any one else. His gestures were significant of events, and his eyes of invitations to a wedding. The announcement which was to create a sensation in both worlds was legible there, printed in large characters: "The heir of Jean Têterol will shortly wed the only daughter of the Baron de Saligneux: it is written in the stars, because it was first written in my head."

The baron wore quite a different expression, and, if the people whom he met on his way back to Sali-

gneux had taken the trouble to examine him, they would have probably decided that his air was contented but not haughty. Fortunately for him, the Countess de Juines was not in the drawing-room when he entered ; but, having cast his eye, like Ruy Gomez, over the numerous family portraits which covered the walls, it seemed to him that the pictures were gazing at him, and he said to them crossly, "You can blame me, at your ease. In your day you had not to reckon with new France." Then, perceiving a pretty pastel which, from between two windows, addressed to him mute reproaches, he murmured, "Don't be angry, my pet ; this marriage has not yet taken place."

IX.

It was the 10th of September. M. Têterol had risen before daybreak in order to dispatch his carriage and coachman to Pont d'Ain, to bring him his son, the pride and delight of his heart. He had not seen him for nearly three years. Fully occupied with his studies and his travels, Lionel had not made acquaintance with his father's new establishment, and the latter had not endeavored to attract him thither. On the contrary, whenever the young man had shown any desire to spend his vacations with him, he had replied, "We will see about that later." He desired that his house should first be built and furnished, and his estate in perfect order. He was like

an emperor who did not wish to show himself to his heir except in his full glory.

The weather was the finest possible ; the sky was cloudless, as though it wished to adorn itself for the festive occasion which was drawing near. M. Têterol counted the minutes with feverish impatience. He went in and out of his drawing-room, sometimes playing with his hands, sometimes looking at the door through which would enter the object which he held dearest, most precious, before or after his money. He avoided committing himself on that point ; there are questions which are so delicate that it is better not to meddle with them.

At length he heard the gate open, and the gravel of the courtyard creaked under the wheels of a tilbury. For a moment he thought of descending the staircase precipitately, in order to embrace his Prince of Wales more quickly. He changed his mind, fearing to compromise his paternal majesty, which must always be kept inviolable. He stood motionless, and held his breath. The next moment, a slender, graceful young man, with well-formed shoulders, a rather pale face, and an eye which was sunken but full of fire, threw himself on his neck. Têterol pressed him in his arms, and alternately held him at arm's length and drew him close, in order to look at him or to embrace him again. Then he led him before a mirror, and said, "We do not resemble each other much, my prince. Would any one believe that this man was the father of that one?" Then he led him to the dining-room, where a savory breakfast awaited him,

of which he himself did not partake. Faithful to his old habits of abstinence, he ate only one meal a day, took some porridge at nine o'clock, and went so until evening. He seated himself opposite Lionel, placed his elbows on the table, and watched him eat, while he overwhelmed him with questions. He asked him, without pausing, if he had slept well on the train ; if he had felt any emotion on perceiving the steeple of Saligneux for the first time ; if he knew German as well as he knew English ; if it was true that Berlin and London were built of bricks ; if one could believe, as people maintained, that the verdure was greener in England than elsewhere, and that the King of Prussia never took off his helmet ; how many auditors there were in the Council of State ; what was the salary of auditors of the first class, of *maîtres des requêtes*, of councilors and presidents of sections. He was inexhaustible in his interrogations ; and, fixing his gray eye, which looked black from time to time, on the young man, he drank in his replies. In truth, he listened to them as one listens to an opera when the music is more interesting than the words. The essential point for him was to hear his prince's voice, which was clear and of a fine tone. He said to himself, "How well he speaks ! What success he will have in court one of these days !"

As soon as Lionel had slaked his thirst, and satisfied his hunger by double mouthfuls, in order to be free to answer his father's innumerable questions, the latter led him to the apartment which he had prepared for him with his own hands, and decked with a thousand

knick-knacks, with as much care as a lover who thinks of his lady while buying his furniture.

"Is there enough?" he asked, shrugging his shoulders and casting his eyes round the room. "Devil take me if I know what good it will do you ; but Pointal insists that you have a taste for baubles. Great good may it do you ! Here are two nail-brushes, one for each hand. Is that enough ! I never could understand why people brushed their nails. But look, do these Daghestan curtains, which I had sent from the shops of the Louvre, please you ? It is the latest novelty. You see that I deny you nothing. There are six of them, and they cost forty francs apiece, not to mention the bands, which cost five francs and ninety centimes ; and white Swiss muslin curtains at a franc and ten sous the metre. You can count it up. And then, God forgive me, a liquor-case and boxes of cigars, and here is cologne which comes from Cologne, pure Farina. Be careful of it ; when it is gone it is gone. Ah ! if you wish to brush up a little, make haste, for I must take you to see my garden."

Lionel dressed as quickly as he had breakfasted, and hastened to rejoin his father, who was awaiting him with his broad-brimmed hat on his head and his everlasting holly-stick in his hand.

M. Têterol had given orders that everything should be cleaned, dusted, scoured, freshly polished and shining ; that there should not be a dry leaf on the turf, nor a bit of dirt in the paths, nor a spot of rust on the locks of the doors. He wished to dazzle his prince ; he intended that his glory should be re-

flected in the enthusiasm of his heir. They visited first the stables, the cattle-sheds, the barns for hay, and the dairy, where they made a profound study of a new kind of churn, infinitely superior to all churns known to man up to that day. Then they inspected the poultry-yard and pig-pens ; they passed in review the cart-sheds, troughs, and horse-ponds, the geese and ganders, the drakes and ducks, the Dorking and Cochin China cocks, the hogs and breed sows, and all their little pigs with corkscrew tails. Thence they arrived at the fruit garden, from which they passed into the vegetable garden. Everything must be seen and admired in the greatest detail, from the wall-fruit to the asparagus plants, from the melon-beds to the shallots ; and Lionel was forced to confess that no country that he had visited produced shallots and melons which could be compared to those of the White House.

Then they set out to make the grand tour of the farms, and in that way they spent the entire afternoon. M. Têterol halted before every piece of land, explained minutely when and how he had come into possession of it, what price he had paid for it, in what state he had found it, by what means he had increased its productiveness, and by what improvements he intended to still further increase it. Solemn and majestic, he related all these stories in a tone befitting an epic ; he borrowed Clio's trumpet. It was like Alexander telling of Granicus, Arbela ; Sogdana conquered after Persia, and India after Bactria ; Persepolis destroyed, Alexandria rising from the earth on an order

from his royal mouth, which with a word caused empires to appear or disappear.

He nudged Lionel with his elbow, as he completed his explanation, and said, "What do you think of it all?"

Lionel thought what he had always thought, that his father was a very remarkable man, who understood everything, even the things he knew nothing about; that he possessed an instinct which supplied the lack of study and was nearly akin to genius. The young man lent a respectful and attentive ear to the paternal eloquence, he bowed in sign of approbation, he admired; but his admiration was not enthusiasm, and enthusiasm was what was required of him. A cloud passed over M. Têterol's brow; his triumph was not so dazzling as he had hoped it would be: his heir did not exclaim at anything, did not dance with delight, did not go into ecstasies. The exacting old man gradually spoke less; a heavy discontent was gathering within him, and only waited for an opportunity to break out.

The father and son, ascending the Limourde, arrived on the brink of an irrigating canal, covered here and there with water-lilies, which spread their floating leaves, their pure white corollas, and their shining gold stamens, over the surface of the water.

"Ah! what beautiful flowers!" exclaimed Lionel.

This time his admiration had an accent of enthusiasm. M. Têterol's face contracted, his eyebrows united and formed an acute angle, and he drew up

the corners of his mouth like a man who has swallowed sour fruit.

"Can you tell me of what use are these beautiful flowers?" he asked his son.

"None, that I am aware of. What is beautiful does not need to be useful."

"What ethics! What are we coming to with such principles? I, for my part, only care for flowers which are of some use."

"Turnip flowers, for example."

"Yes, monsieur, turnip flowers," replied M. Têterol, who called his son "monsieur" when out of humor with him. "They are not so fortunate as to please you?"

"I grant them the excuse of extenuating circumstances; but I assure you that these lilies—"

"Lily yourself!" interrupted M. Têterol, rather tartly. And, returning after his ordinary method to the idea which he was rolling in his brain, he added, without taking the trouble to explain the connection: "Young people are fortunate nowadays! Fortune, the amenities of life, all come to them without any exertion of their own. It is the father who must battle hand and foot. Work, my good fellow, exert yourself, perform the labor of four. You will not even be thanked."

"Of whom are you speaking, my good father?" asked Lionel, much astonished.

"Of—I perceived, a little while ago, that my stories bored you."

"They interested me extremely. My humble opin-

ion is that the proprietor of the White House is a man who understands the administration of his land as well as the construction of houses ; and I assure you that I admire infinitely—”

“ My water-lilies ! That is how you reward me.”

“ I will not look at them again,” replied the young man, smiling ; and, seizing his father's hands, he exclaimed, “ I admire these two hands, which have gained such glorious battles, more than all the lilies in the world.”

And he raised them respectfully to his lips. These words and the gesture calmed M. Têterol's irritation, and his brow cleared. They walked on, and, after having ascended an eminence, sat down on the grass, at the edge of an oak-grove. From this spot the eye fell upon the château of Saligneux, upon its terrace and its lawn, the forest-trees, and their superb masses of verdure. M. Têterol, who perspired easily, had drawn a handkerchief from his pocket, and was mopping his face. Lionel gazed at the château, whose quaint architecture and surroundings delighted him, though he took care not to show it, being warned by his late experience.

“ Do not restrain yourself,” said his father, suddenly. “ Confess that you would give ten White Houses for that nobleman's seat, for that squire's bonbon box.”

“ Not at all,” replied Lionel, who had gained nothing by his prudent silence. “ The White House is doubtless much more comfortable, much more convenient to live in ; and, if any one were to make me a

present of that old castle, I should not know what to do with it."

"But you have been devouring it with your eyes for the last ten minutes."

"It is a form of speech to say that I devour it. I take a pleasure in looking at it, but I do not care about owning it."

"Really? Well! for my part, I only like to see what I own. And, moreover, you may say that that château, the park, those tall trees, are pretty; but I do not think the sight of them is agreeable. Does it not seem to you that there is something which spoils them? Look closely."

"Really, for all I can see—"

"I repeat, that there is something which spoils them."

"What?"

"Mortgages."

Lionel could not help laughing. "You cannot see mortgages," he answered; "or, at least, I have not the power of seeing them."

"I see them, sir," retorted M. Têterol. "There's where we differ."

Lionel bowed. "So the Baron de Saligneux is embarrassed in his affairs?" he asked.

"He would be if he had any. Do such people have affairs?"

"What sort of a man is the baron?"

"A fool. He has a daughter who possesses good sense; she must have got it from her mother. But I believe you are capable of liking fools."

"I do not detest them. Their freaks are entertaining sometimes, and the world would be rather monotonous without them."

"There is one good thing about them," retorted M. Têterol, with a grin; "their extravagances form the patrimony of sensible people. This one in particular has rendered society the precious service of putting the property of his ancestors into circulation again. It is a good thing to be put down to his credit, and if he were not a squire— Do you happen to like squires?"

"That depends."

"On what?"

"On what they are like. The personage is worth whatever the man is worth."

"Ta ta! what nonsense! So you are a reactionary? You do not believe in the principles of '89, and the equality of all men?"

"If men are all equal, why will you not allow that a baron is as good as his farm-hand?"

"There is my doctor of law. You deal in sophisms. There is nothing which distorts the mind like the study of the law. I tell you that I hate all your gentry. Upon my word! I understand why people enjoyed guillotining them formerly. Is it not pitiful to see persons who are as poor as rats putting on airs? Why? Because they have birth. Was I not born, too? You pain me; I thought you were a liberal."

"I am, with all my heart. To live one's self and to let others live, even when the men or ideas do not

please one, is the foundation principle of liberalism. So I should never guillotine any one."

"That is not the question," retorted M. Têterol, who had a queer way of arguing. "Can you tell me of what use this baron is, and how he deserves the profound bows with which every one salutes him when he traverses Saligneux? Yet every one knows that he is ruined, or next door to it."

"That is precisely what he is good for," replied Lionel. "I consider that he renders the people of this district a service by accustoming them to respect something besides riches."

This imprudent remark produced a disastrous effect. M. Têterol cast a terrible glance on his son. "Ah! sir, despise riches!" he exclaimed. "Very good, indeed! My young gentleman lives like the son of a noble, spends a great deal of money, goes through a very expensive course of study; he travels in England, in Germany; he rides, he goes to the theatre, he denies himself nothing. It is fortunate for my lord that his father has millions, for a Prince of Wales costs a great deal. My lord enjoys his father's millions, and assumes an air of despising them. You must confess that it is like affording yourself every sort of pleasure at one and the same time."

"I do not despise your millions. God forbid!" replied Lionel, forcing a smile to hide the pain which his father's brutal apostrophe caused him; "but you must not require me to respect them."

"Good! better and better! Ah! you do not respect your father!"

"I do respect him immensely, not because he is rich, but because he is to me the model of honor, probity, and labor," he returned, in a soothing voice. "As for the allowance which he makes his Prince of Wales, I am very much obliged to him for it; but I assure you I should know how to get on without it."

"I should like to see you try it," said M. Têterol, bursting with laughter. "Ah! monsieur, what would become of you without me? Oh! what a fine fancy! what an amusing idea! Upon my word! you are as great a fool as your friend the squire."

"Certainly, for I am, like him, proud of my birth. I am proud to bear the name of Têterol, proud to bear the name of a self-made man, of a nobody who has become somebody. Guillotine me; I am an aristocrat."

"Eh! yes, we are plebeians!" exclaimed M. Têterol, completely disarmed by this flattery; "and I glory in it. I belong to the people, and I love them because I am one of them."

He was about to expatiate on this subject, but had not the time to say more before he heard a suspicious noise in the oak-grove. He clapped his hat hastily on his head, rose, listened, then slipped into a thicket, and the next moment set out at the top of his speed, crying, "Halt, or you are a dead man!" Lionel followed him, and saw him in the distance grasping the collar of a fugitive. It was a poor fellow who had come to the wood to gather mushrooms. Caught in the act, he had abandoned his booty and taken to his heels; but it was not possible to escape from M. Tê-

terol, who, having seized his man by the throat, shook him as one would shake a plum-tree to make the fruit fall. On arriving at the scene of battle, Lionel found one of the combatants past resistance, and his father engaged in strangling a member of the poor people, whom he loved so much because he was one of them.

"Wretch, I have you at last!" cried M. Têterol. "You like to steal better than to work. Do you imagine that I drudged for fifty years in order that beggars like you might come and eat the very coat off my back? I have been watching you for a long time, and I'll settle your business."

The marauder availed himself of the little breath he had left to explain that he had had a fever, that he was not in a condition to work, and that he had not supposed there would be any harm in coming to gather a few mushrooms.

"To whom do my mushrooms belong?" retorted M. Têterol, with redoubled fury. "To whom does this wood belong? Who owns the wall which you climbed over to bring your dirty person here? I will teach you to respect my mushrooms, my woods, and my walls."

And he shook him more vigorously than ever. The poor fellow was exhausted, his eyes were starting out of his head. He had not lied; he certainly had had a fever. His frail body, his sickly air, his thin, pale cheeks, as miserable as the ragged stable-coat which he wore, proved it. Moreover, the iron wrist, which never relaxed for an instant, frightened him exces-

sively : he thought he had to do with eternal justice ; he thought he heard the trumpet of the day of judgment. He inspired Lionel with pity, and the latter said to his father : " You are squeezing him too tightly ; you will strangle him."

" And what if I should strangle him ! " replied M. Têterol. " Instead of amusing yourself with chattering, go quickly and find the rural policeman, that we may make a complaint against this scamp. He is not far off ; I saw him a little while ago in the road near the Limourde. Are you not going ? "

Lionel did not stir. " Will you do me a favor ? " said he. " I beg forgiveness for this poor fellow."

" For whom do you take me ? I have never forgiven anybody. I know only the law ; I have always respected it, and I intend to have others respect it. Will you go for the police ? It would be rendering humanity a service to rid it of its vermin. You are not gone yet ? "

The young man approached his father, to try to make him let go. M. Têterol repulsed him violently ; but, suddenly perceiving that, if this discussion with his son were prolonged, he ran the risk of compromising his authority in the eyes of all the marauders in the country, he swallowed his wrath, let go his prisoner, administered a parting blow, and said to him, " Get out of here, you rascal ! "

The man asked nothing better ; he never even thought of reclaiming one of his shoes which he had lost in the brawl ; and he hastened away, followed by Lionel, who said to him with feigned indignation,

"Don't presume to come here again, or you will catch it. Here, you rascal," he added, lowering his voice, "here is something to buy you shoes." And, having made sure that his father's eye was no longer on him, he furtively drew from his pocket and slipped into the poacher's hand a coin, which was a five-franc piece.

M. Têterol waited for him, with his back against an oak, and his eyes rolling terribly. "Monsieur," said he, "I wish to warn you, once for all, that I do not permit any one to meddle with my affairs. If you came here to give me lessons, you would have done better to stay away."

"God forbid that I should give you lessons!" replied his son; "but I pitied the poor man. He seemed to me to be on the brink of death."

"Let him die wherever he likes, only don't let him come poaching on my property! I fancy I see you one of these days take a trumpet, and go about proclaiming everywhere, 'Fill your hands and your pockets, friends; old Têterol is a perfect lamb; don't restrain yourselves; what is his is yours.' These are my new doctors of law; these are the people who make us lose our cases. So you have a taste for vermin! You are a socialist!"

"My case is a bad one if I am a socialist and a reactionist at the same time," said Lionel, smiling.

M. Têterol stamped. "When I do not laugh," he shouted, "I expect that no one else will laugh."

"Excuse me," said the young man in a coaxing tone. "This is a festival day, and I am so happy to

see you again, after an absence of three years, that I feel kindly disposed toward all the world, toward squires as well as mushroom stealers."

"Very well ! but don't try to convert me to your opinions : accept mine ; it will be better for you and for me both."

Thereupon M. Têterol set out again on his walk. His brow was clouded, and for ten minutes at least he did not open his lips. Lionel was sorry to have displeased him three times already. When he set out for Saligneux, he resolved that he would have no quarrel with his father during the whole time which he should pass there. He endeavored to get into his good graces again, and took so much pains that he finally succeeded. He spoke to the irascible sexagenarian of a model farm which he had visited in the county of Chester, and of a new system of distributing crops practised there. His mind was clear, and his memory trustworthy. He answered the questions which his father put to him in a surly tone by such clear, precise explanations, that the latter was not long in becoming reconciled to his heir, and in forgiving him what he called his freaks. By the time they had reached the White House, M. Têterol had regained his good-humor, and said to Lionel, "Let us dine, I am as hungry as a wolf."

The dinner passed off well ; it was excellent, and the two men did justice to it. When coffee had been served, M. Têterol sent Joseph to the apartment of the Prince of Wales for the boxes of cigars which he had placed there. Having opened one of them—

"Smoke, since you are in the habit of it," he said to his son. "It's a queer habit, any way. Here are cigars which cost ten sous apiece. At the end of a quarter of an hour you will have spent ten sous in smoke. Is it not a pity?"

The invitation was so little pressing that Lionel did not care to accept it; but M. Têterol insisted, saying, "Smoke: you will please me; your vices are my luxury."

The young man lit a cigar. M. Têterol, who had never smoked in his life, watched him as he sat opposite him, holding in his hand a knife with which he drummed on the table. Suddenly he said, "My prince, do you know why I had you come down here?"

"I suppose it was to give us both the pleasure of seeing each other."

"There is something in that; but that is not all. Do you not guess? I wish you to marry."

"You want me to marry!" exclaimed Lionel, stupefied. "There is no hurry about it; wait, at least, until I am fully twenty-five."

"No, I will not wait. An opportunity has presented itself, and I shall marry you at once."

"And to whom are you going to marry me?"

"Guess," said M. Têterol, and added, measuring his words, and congratulating himself in advance on the prodigious effect they were about to produce: "You have a taste for the gentry; what would you say if I were to give you a baron's daughter?"

"I should say you were making fun of me. You

detest all the gentry on earth too much to ally yourself with them, and you would never look for a daughter-in-law in a château."

"There is where you are mistaken. I shall look for a daughter-in-law in a château, and the château is not very far from here either; you saw it a little while ago, and thought it superb."

"Am I dreaming?" demanded Lionel, more and more confounded. "You want me to marry—"

"Mlle. de Saligneux," interposed M. Têterol, puffing out his cheeks. Then, at the risk of breaking down the table, he leaned both his elbows on it, and exclaimed, "Are you pleased with me, my boy?"

"I don't believe you; you are jesting. M. de Saligneux is your enemy; you have had lawsuits—"

"Two, which I lost; this is the third, and I have won it."

"Ah! so it is against his will—"

"Not the least in the world," said M. Têterol, correcting himself instantly. "This match enchants him, delights him, is the height of his desire. His daughter has nothing, and you will have a million. Do you understand, my boy?—a million!"

"And Mlle. de Saligneux consents also?"

"She adores you."

"Without having seen me?"

"A pretty idea! She has heard of you."

"And especially of the million. The foolish creature!"

"She is charming," growled M. Têterol, "and if I

could have married her myself— But that is impossible,” he added in a thrilling tone.

It must be confessed that he had considered the case, and, to his great displeasure, his good-sense had made incontrovertible objections. He resumed: “I give her to you, Lionel, and I would remind you that I am waiting to be thanked.”

Lionel threw himself back in his chair, and looked at the smoke from his cigar. He seemed to perceive a very young, very charming face, which pleased him extremely, and of which he thought nearly every day. He maintained a dead silence for a few minutes.

“I think you lack enthusiasm, you man of the lilies!” exclaimed M. Têterol, growing impatient.

“Well, why do you want me to marry Mlle. de Saligneux?” demanded Lionel, recovering himself.

“He demands my reasons!”

“Tell me one.”

“What! it gives you no pleasure to think that the people about here, as well as the idlers in Paris, will say one of these days, ‘You know that the son of Jean Têterol has married the daughter of the Baron de Saligneux!’”

He pronounced this word of three syllables as though it had ten.

“That causes me neither pain nor pleasure.”

“Well! it has its effect on me. And then, you understand that we shall persuade your good-for-nothing father-in-law to leave the place. We will give him an income, and send him back to his pleasures; we will send him to lounge on his beloved boulevard,

and he will leave Saligneux to his daughter. What belongs to her will belong to you ; what belongs to you belongs to me. Are not you and I one and the same person ? We will have everything in common ; no more inclosures, no more boundaries, no more Limourde. We will reconstruct the ancient domain of Saligneux, which will thenceforth be the domain of the Têterols, and we will hold it conjointly. It shall be our France and our Navarre. Tell me, Lionel, will not that be fine ?”

Then he scratched his forehead painfully, as if to force out a timid thought which sought to escape, which did not venture to show itself, and he continued with some embarrassment : “ And then, the Baron de Saligneux will not be immortal ! At his death he might leave you—such things are done—a baron some day ?”

“ Ah ! what an idea !” exclaimed Lionel. “ Is it really you who are talking to me, you who were just preaching the principles of '89, the equality of men, contempt for titles and for those who bear them ?”

“ Don't try to make me contradict myself,” replied M. Têterol, angrily. “ In the first place, I never contradict myself ; and in the next place, if I choose to contradict myself, have I not the right to do so ? Am I not rich enough for that ?” and, drawing from his pocket a handful of gold pieces, he threw them abruptly on the table, where they spread, rolling noisily about : it was a truly Spanish act. Nevertheless, out of respect for the truth, we must add that he made

haste to pick them up, and that he counted them before returning them to his pocket. Not every man can act the Spaniard to the very end.

Lionel had relapsed into silence.

"Do you know, Lionel," said his father, "I suspect that you have left a lady-love in Paris."

"You are mistaken," he answered, coldly; "I brought her here in my trunk, and will unpack her to-morrow."

"I have already told you that, when I am serious I do not permit any one to jest," exclaimed M. Têterol, exasperated.

"Without jesting, father, if I am unwilling to marry Mlle. de Saligneux, it is not because I am in love. Women have not succeeded in gaining a foothold in my life or my heart. I promise you, with all seriousness, not to marry without your approval, and never to summon you—"

"Heavens, how good he is! A delicious young man!" interrupted M. Têterol.

"In return, I beg you to have some consideration for my liberty. Grant me, at least, the time to turn about, to examine. Perhaps, when I have seen the young girl whom you wish me to marry—"

"Whom I wish you to marry!" interrupted M. Têterol, again. "What a way of expressing it! I do not wish it, I will it, the affair is settled, the business concluded." And thumping the table—"Were Mlle. de Saligneux lame, hump-backed, bandy-legged, one-armed, and frightfully ugly, all the same, you should marry her because it pleased me."

Lionel rose, saying, "I feel rather weary ; permit me to retire. If you desire it, we will resume this conversation to-morrow."

And he approached his father to kiss him. The latter held up his dry, bony cheek, and received his kiss, but did not return it. Then, detaining Lionel by the buttonhole—

"To-morrow," said he, "I must go to Bourg, where I have business to attend to, and I shall not return before evening. Finish your reflections before that time, and try to answer your own objections. I have a holy horror of useless words."

When he was left alone, M. Têterol paced up and down the room. He was only half-satisfied with the day to which he had so long looked forward, and which had not fulfilled his expectations. He had just discovered that his Prince of Wales had cobwebs in his brain—that was his way of expressing it—and he resolved to sweep them out. He had many complaints to make against him. First, Lionel had not sufficiently admired the White House ; second, he had admired the lilies too much ; third, he had asserted that the gentry were good for something ; fourth, he had maintained that there is something in the world more respectable than millions ; fifth, he had begged off a poacher. But, worst of all, he had insisted on seeing Mlle. de Saligneux before marrying her, and had shown more repugnance than enthusiasm toward the sublime idea cherished by his father.

M. Têterol paced to and fro, and, in order to vent his ill-humor, each time he passed a chair in

his way he struck it, as though it had been a squire or a robber of mushrooms, a socialist or a reactionist, a cripple or a fool.

X.

LIONEL Téterol had not closed his eyes on the train, and the tour of inspection had kept him on his feet for nearly seven consecutive hours. He was very weary when he went to bed. In spite of his thoughts and the turmoil they caused, he had hardly laid his head on his pillow before he fell into a deep sleep, from which he did not awake until morning ; but on waking he found all his thoughts in attendance on him : they always are in attendance on us.

He rose, and dressed without using either the two nail-brushes or the cologne-water from Cologne. After completing his toilet, which was brief, he spent a good hour leaning on his window-sill. The country, like himself, was just awake. The dawning day gazed at him with tender eye ; it was glad to renew its acquaintance with the light. The dew-besprinkled lawn exhaled a delicious odor. The Limourde seemed to coquet with its banks, which its shining waters caressed lovingly. Tall poplars ranged in a row cast their transparent shadows in stripes over the whiteness of a field of buckwheat in bloom ; the heather formed rosy spots on the hillsides ; smoke rose slowly in the air, moving to right and left, as though it would resume its course. On the horizon, two clouds

of a silvery-gray floated in the azure, like two wind-filled sails ; they seemed setting out on some gay voyage. A profound peace, a tranquil silence reigned in the valley, as if fallen from heaven. There was no sound but the whispering of the breeze, as it conversed with an aspen, and the confused hum of a wasp who had risen early to explore the trellis in the chimerical hope of finding a ripe grape. But Lionel shortly heard the sound of a reaper's hook being sharpened, the cadenced stroke of a flail in a barn, and the heavy blows of a hammer falling on the anvil.

Held by some charm, Lionel would perhaps have spent more than one hour at his window, had he not, on turning his head to the right, suddenly perceived the château of Saligneux at the end of the valley. From that moment he thought only of Mlle. de Saligneux, his bad angel, to whom he sent all his maledictions through the air. An idea struck him ; he seized his pen and wrote the following letter :

“MY DEAR M. POINTAL : You are the kind of a friend to whom one tells everything. I have not spent twenty-four hours at the White House, and I have already something to tell you. You warned me, O clear-sighted man, that I must expect conflicts, or, at the least, painful friction ; you advised me to be prepared and to act like a philosopher. Your prediction has been fulfilled sooner than you expected. My father and I are almost in a state of war, and I do not think it is my fault. I was disposed to make every possible concession to him, even great sacrifices ; but he de-

mands too much of me, and I doubt whether my philosophy will hold out to the end.

"It seems to me that I only made his acquaintance yesterday. I formerly saw him through the eyes of a child, and a child's eyes possess the precious privilege of not passing judgment on the object loved; so I never could understand the terror he occasioned to my poor mother. In the evenings, when we were alone, and she talked confidentially to me—that humble *bourgeoise* had the soul of a princess, and whenever she deigned to lay it open before me, I thought I saw a casket filled with sapphires and emeralds. But what was I about to tell you, M. Pointal? I never finish my sentences, when I begin to think of my mother. She used to interrupt hers, too; she often shuddered in the middle of a word. If she heard a heavy step in the vestibule, she would say to me, as she turned pale: 'It is he!' Then I would exclaim, 'You are afraid of him,' and would run to meet the man who made her tremble. If he was out of temper, my caresses, my coaxing soon conquered him; and I returned to her, casting a triumphant glance at her, as if to say, 'You see, he barks, but he does not bite.' Well, he frightens me now. Who will give me back my childish eyes?

"People are right in asserting that it is easier to do one's duty than to know what duty is. I am resolved to do mine, at whatever cost; but I should be glad to have it pointed out to me. You know that I am not an undutiful son; you know what respect and affection I have always felt for my father—how

sensible I am of his goodness to me, how desirous I am of repaying it. I have often spoken to you on the subject, and you believed me, for you know also that I have a holy horror of all affectation. Why does my father incessantly call to mind what I owe him? Does he fear that I shall refuse to acknowledge it? No, it is not on the sum to be repaid, but on the mode of repayment, that I disagree with him. If occasion should require, he can dispose of my strength, my health, my life itself; but can I place my dignity, my conscience, my honor, in his hands, and say, 'Decide, pronounce: Your will, whatever it may be, shall be the sole rule of my conduct?' What is a man who renounces his own will? He is no longer a man, and I wish to be one.

"'What is the case in question?' you ask. Without warning me, without consulting me, he has taken it into his head that I must marry. Whom? I give you a hundred guesses, nay, a thousand. Mlle. Claire de Saligneux, daughter of that Baron Patrice de Saligneux, his mortal enemy, his pet abomination, whom, a few days ago, he hated like the gates of hell. Is it not like wedding the Republic of Venice to the Grand Turk? In truth the Grand Turk is delighted with the match; but the Republic protests. On the one side it is a question of interest, and on the other it would be a satisfaction to vanity; but I call Heaven and M. Pointal to witness that I am proud, but I am not vain. What difference does it make to me whether she is the daughter of a baron or of a laborer? I don't see the difference, and the only woman I care to marry

is the woman I love. No, I will not marry this baron's daughter. What a miserable little heart she must have! She gives herself without solicitation to a man whom she has never seen. What could you expect? She has nothing, and they have told her that he will have a clear million. There is where we differ, mademoiselle! I insist on our seeing each other. But that is a right which is contested. 'The bargain is struck,' my father replies. 'I had you come here because we cannot do without you for the ceremony, and because a young man cannot be married unless he is present; but you have no voice in the matter. Shut your eyes and say "amen" to everything. If the child is not good, if the child refuses to swallow his medicine, he will be whipped and made to swallow it.'

"My dear monsieur, you were one day so friendly as to say that, like my father, I had good, strong sense, a practical mind, a quick comprehension of business; but that I had inherited from my mother a taste for weaving romances and fancying that they would be fulfilled. You added that it was impossible to decide whether Nature had destined me for a politician or a poet. I neither believe in the contradiction nor in the necessity of the choice. I flatter myself that I am not romantic. An idealist—that is quite another thing; but do you think that a little idealism ever injured human affairs, and that there is no mean between the chimeras of a dreamer and the petty tricks of an empiric? Well, I shall never be an artist. Heaven has denied me the faculty of express-

ing the best there is within me by words or lines—by either harmonies of sound or color. My actions alone can express what I believe, what I love, what I feel ; and I intend that they shall express it. It would be better for me to die than to be divided, and spend one half of my time in imagining great things, and the other half in committing mean little actions. Now, is it not a mean and even a base action to marry, with a view to ambition or vanity, a woman who does not love you, and to sacrifice the liberty of one's heart to a calculation ? If such were my *début* in the world, could my conscience be responsible to me for the rest ? Humiliated wills never recover, and the step is slippery between an action which belittles us and an action which disgraces us. Whoever is mean in his youth runs a great risk of becoming a scoundrel in riper years ; meanness leads to villainy with fatal attraction. But even were it otherwise, have I not read in one of the dialogues of the divine Plato that one should strive to put a little music in his life ? Marry Mlle. de Saligneux ! Ah ! M. Pointal, what sad music ! and what would Plato think of it ? and above all, what should I think of it myself ? And I think more of satisfying myself than of satisfying Plato.

“M. Pointal, hasten to my assistance. You are the only man who exercises any influence over my father, the only one whose counsels he has sometimes listened to. He has consulted you in everything pertaining to my education and studies, and has almost always yielded to your advice. Perhaps he will listen to you now. Take your best pen, the one which

makes your copies, dip it in your best ink, and write to my tyrant that I have confided in you, and that his plan seems to you to be deplorable. He will not be angry with me for having opened my heart to you ; he knows how intimate we are. Must I tell you what to say ? Represent to him that this marriage might compromise my career ; that by settling me too soon, by giving me the daughter of a baron, and fifty thousand livres income, he runs the risk of ruining my future ; that I shall think myself at the end of my course before I have started ; that I shall stagnate in my idleness, that I shall bury myself in my happiness, and that swans subjected to a certain *régime* become simply big barn-yard geese. He will listen to that argument : he is even more ambitious for me than I am for myself.

“M. Pointal, I am a shipwrecked man who is waving his handkerchief to attract assistance. If you get me out of this scrape—if, thanks to you, I escape from Mlle. de Saligneux without quarreling with my father—I shall owe you a good turn. But I will not promise that that will add to the respectful affection which I have consecrated to you ; which does not depend on the services you have rendered me, or on those which you will render me in the future.”

Lionel folded his letter, and while folding it said to himself, “Mlle. de Saligneux may not be bandy-legged, or humpbacked, or frightfully ugly ; but has she the face of my unknown, her delicate figure, her flashing glance, the pride of her finely-arched black

brows, the frankness of her clear, penetrating voice, and that little foot which I have held in my hand? That would settle everything." Then he exclaimed, "No, I will not marry Mlle. de Saligneux ; I swear it by my pride, and by thy brown eyes!" And he added in mockery of himself, "It is three months since I saw her, and I still think of her. How childish I am!"

And childish he was, in fact. Shall we consider it a crime in him? It is good to be thoroughly versed in law ; it is also good to have childish fancies, and to take them in earnest. The first duty of youth is to be young.

Who was the unknown whose memory and brown eyes Lionel Têterol had just invoked? He would have been glad to know her name ; but whom to ask? and, if he had known it, what would he have gained? What he knew for a certainty was, that he had met her for the first time six months before, on the 27th of February. The dead leaves still clung to the trees, but at their feet the grass was already fresh and shining. Spring was emerging from its shell, bidding defiance to the winter and the north wind, which threatened to make her reënter it. The sky resembled the face of a Parisienne, whose mobility of feature, caprice, and play of light and shade, it possessed ; it was not a classically beautiful sky, but many pleasant things went on there, and little white clouds were visible, which veiled and disclosed the sun by turns.

Lionel, who had lately returned from England, was then living at Auteuil in a small house which one

of his friends had lent him, that he might work more tranquilly on his thesis, to which he was putting the last touches. Every afternoon he took it out for an airing, and walked with it for an hour or two through the wood. On that particular day he walked with it along a pretty path which borders the Poteaux road, reserved for people on horseback. He had just stopped to take breath, and was engaged in gazing at an old oak clothed in ivy from head to foot, a group of birches which seemed to be shivering under their thin, silvery bark, an enormous clump of briers whose crooked arms interlaced, and three pines which stood out against the sky, with their needles of the softest green, and their yellow trunks flecked with sunlight, when he heard the neighing of a horse. He turned round, and saw a young lady accompanied by a cavalier with white locks. After she had passed, he followed her with his eyes for a long time. We all have in our brain a woman's face which our fancy has created; when we see, in the Avenue des Poteaux or elsewhere, an unknown, on horseback or on foot, who resembles it, we say to ourselves, "It is she, at last!" It seemed to Lionel that he had already seen in a dream the lively and piquant brunette whom he had just met. Alas! she had disappeared very quickly, and he would have done better not to think of her again. But he did think of her, and in his leisure moments asked himself, "Is that old man who accompanied her her father or her husband?" This question was absolutely foreign to his thesis, which turned on a point of international law.

During the whole of the month of March he returned two or three times every week to walk along the Avenue des Poteaux, in the hope of seeing his unknown. He did see her again, but she did not see him. She did not suspect that there was a young man there watching her, and that he had come expressly for that purpose. Nothing is more disagreeable than to love a woman or a young girl who is unconscious of your existence. Happily for Lionel, a chance came to his assistance.

A week later he once more saw the one for whom he was watching pass before him, and this time he heard the sound of her voice. Her eyes shining, her hair flying in the wind, her complexion heightened, she was galloping at full speed ; and looking back at her companion, who followed her with difficulty, she cried—"Ah ! uncle, how delightful it is to live !"

To which he responded, "Very good, if it only lasts : take care not to fall."

"Good old man," thought Lionel, "you are not her husband."

The white-haired man had cause for his uneasiness. At that moment the unknown's horse stumbled, and she lost her seat. In the twinkling of an eye Lionel, leaping over a hedge, reached her side, and offered her the assistance of which she had little need. He could not help her to regain her feet, for she had fallen on them ; he could not run after the horse, for she had not dropped the reins ; but her hat had fallen a few paces off. He hastened to pick it up, and presented it to her. Before putting it on her head, she

busied herself in arranging her fine dark brown hair, which had fallen down. Lionel extended his hand ; she placed the tip of her foot in it, and mounted quickly, while her uncle lectured her for her giddiness.

"Scold Théodore," she replied. "I was thinking of him when I fell."

After which she bestowed a gracious smile on Lionel, and set out at a brisk trot.

The smile would have enchanted the young man if she had not mentioned Théodore ; but Théodore was too much. Théodore had spoiled everything—Théodore, of whom she had been thinking when she fell from her horse—Théodore, who possessed the glorious privilege of providing her with diversions. Oh ! what a happy man was this Théodore ! Lionel said to himself : "What has he done to obtain such a favor from Heaven ! Her hair, her smile, her heart—she has given him all. Happy and odious Théodore !" He was about to leave the spot when he perceived a marabou feather which had fallen from her hat. He picked it up and carried it off : it was a theft from Théodore.

He often returned to the wood without meeting his unknown. He despaired of ever seeing her again, when his good star led him one evening to the Comédie Française. He had hardly installed himself on his balcony chair before he saw her appear, accompanied by her uncle, in a box on the first tier. She was dressed in pink silk, and wore a flower in her hair. "Will Théodore come ?" Lionel wondered, and he expected every moment to see him enter the box ; but

Théodore did not make his appearance, and Lionel, who was in a happy frame of mind that evening, finally persuaded himself that Théodore was not the dangerous rival he had imagined—that Théodore was simply a dog or a parrot. "If he had been the man she loved," he said to himself, "would she have spoken so freely of him in my presence?"

That evening was delicious to him, except that he noticed that a great many opera-glasses were turned toward the queen of his thoughts: he would have preferred to have her invisible to every one except himself. He gazed at her himself with an indiscretion which she did not perceive; being gifted with long and piercing sight, he could dispense with a glass. The play was "*Il ne faut jurer de rien.*" He took it into his head that the real piece was being played, not on the stage, but in the auditorium; that he was Valentin, his unknown Cécile, and that he was saying to her, "You seem to me very wise for your age, and yet as giddy as I have been since the first stroke of matins," and that she replied, "I confess to the giddiness; but, my friend, I love you. I have only seen you three times, but I have a heart, and know it."

The unknown was far from imagining that she had just said to Lionel, "My friend, I love you." Had she seen him? Did she remember the day when her foot had touched his hand, and that incidents sometimes occur in the Avenue des Poteaux which the heart of a man never forgets? She was absorbed in the play, which interested her like a fairy tale. When

the curtain fell she did not think of going ; her uncle was obliged to touch her gently on the shoulder. Then she started, rose, enveloped herself in her bur-nous, and disappeared in the crowd, where Lionel was not able to find her.

He did not see her again, but did not forget her. After all, it was only a passion of the head, which did not disturb his work, since he passed his examination for doctor of law with the brilliancy already mentioned. But, when he set out for Germany, he took the marabou feather with him. The impossible, the chimerical, disgusts us with vulgar joys, and prevents us from seeking happiness in the common way. Lionel might have exclaimed, like the man reproached for his indifference to women, "What would you have me do? I have in my mind a woman of a rare kind, who preserves me from women of a common kind." He could also have said, "I am deeply indebted to that woman, for she will keep me from marrying Mlle. de Saligneux. Of all my reasons for objecting to that marriage it is the least available, and yet it is a reason."

In spite of a man being doctor of law, and aspiring to become a deputy, he sometimes has reasons which he would not openly avow.

XI.

LIONEL sealed his letter, and sent it to be mailed. Then he breakfasted, and, after breakfast, took alone the walk which he had taken with his father the

day before. On the way he thought neither of harvests nor irrigation, nor of the distribution of crops ; he thought only of his own affair. In a few hours his formidable father would return from Bourg, and then the battle would begin. He fancied he saw him standing before him, his brow seamed with the deep, straight wrinkle which wrath produced there, his eye flashing, his hands clinched, saying to him, " Well, monsieur, have you reflected ? " And yet, the longer he walked, the firmer grew his resolution, and the more his invincible antipathy for Mlle. de Saligneux increased. First he drew her as a silly little person, drilled by the nuns into pretty manners, with her head filled with petty absurdities and strong prejudices ; then as a tall, dry, angular girl, with sallow complexion, long teeth, and pointed shoulders, moving herself in a piece, as stiff as though she had swallowed one of the vanes of the paternal manor-house. In short, whatever her air and manner might be, he did not want her, because he was proud, jealous of his liberty ; because he did not mean to allow his heart to be disposed of without his permission ; because he was determined not to marry a woman whom he did not love.

During his reflections he found himself in the oak-grove whither his father had led him. He passed through it, and descended the grassy declivity which descended to the brook. He halted near an old chestnut-tree, fifty paces from the spot where the lilies grew. He consulted his watch. " I have still three hours to myself," he said ; " it is not time to sound boot and saddle." And he threw himself down at full length

on the grass, which was tall and tufted. Above him he saw the chestnut-tree, with its large, serrated leaves, with which was mingled its ripening fruit, in brown spots, like the eyes of his unknown. Before long he half closed his own, and, by an effort of his will, succeeded in forgetting his situation, his father, and Mlle. de Saligneux. He thought of nothing but the work which he intended to write on Justices of the Peace in England, and which the director of a law review had requested him to supply. He drew up a plan in his head, sketched in the principal sections, and, as he meditated, said to himself, "A man who thinks and works is never thoroughly unhappy." Suddenly a voice made him start. The voice was singing, or rather reciting, the verses of a well-known song.

Lionel raised himself on his elbow and looked. A young girl was seated on the opposite bank of the Limourde, near a clump of hazel-bushes. Her head was bent down, her chin rested in her hand, and her broad-brimmed hat completely concealed her face. The next moment she raised her head, and Lionel thought he was dreaming; his heart beat violently, and he could hardly restrain a cry. O surprise! O mysterious dispensation of that all-powerful divinity which the Great Frederick called "his sacred majesty Chance!" This young singing girl, this young girl seated on the bank of the Limourde, was the rider in the Avenue des Poteaux; she was the Cécile of the Théâtre Français; she was the unknown! Lionel took care not to show himself; a rise in the ground sheltered him. As soon as he had to some extent recovered himself, he gently

put aside the grass in front of him, and placed himself so that he could see without being seen. He remained there mute and motionless, his heart beating with emotion, holding his breath like a child who is afraid of frightening away a butterfly. He knew that unknown ladies have wings—that they fly away, and are not seen again.

Mlle. de Saligneux had taken leave of the Marquis de Virevielle, in consequence of a pressing call from her father. She had arrived that very morning from Paris, whither Mme. de Juines had gone to escort her. After breakfast she had made the tour of her domain, to make sure that it had suffered no further diminution. She admired her Saligneux, even cut up and reduced as it was ; but, having seen it diminish from year to year, she never came back to it without wondering whether anything still remained. She had just decided that what was left was good. But she had not been able to repress a sigh as she thought of its past grandeur. She was not a girl to plunge into melancholy ; she had begun to sing in order to cheer herself, and as she sang, being of an enterprising disposition, the idea had suggested itself—that she should obtain one of the beautiful lilies which she saw a few paces from her on the other side of the brook, and put it in her hair. She knew that the lilies belonged to the enemy ; this consideration only irritated her fancy ; but she knew also that the enemy was always on the watch, and that it was dangerous to expose herself to him : the second consideration made her hesitate. At last, covetousness carried the day over

prudence. She rose, and her first care was to get a rake which had been left in a meadow. She brought it with her, and looked about her. Looking right and left, and on all sides, she did not perceive that in the grass, behind a rise of ground, in the shade of a chestnut-tree which sheltered him with its drooping branches, lay a doctor of law watching her.

Completely reassured, she sat down again, and began to take off her shoes and stockings. Lionel, who did not lose a single movement, soon saw two pretty little feet, which appeared to him to shine like two diamonds in the sun. She looked at them herself with some complacency ; she had often been told that she had a pretty foot, and she had known it before she was informed of it.

Having completed her preparations, she descended the bank cautiously, and stepped into the water, which at that season was very low ; it scarcely came above her ankles. But when she reached the middle of the stream it came half-way up her leg, and she was obliged to raise her skirts to her knees, without suspecting that the doctor of law had opened his eyes wider than he had ever done in his life. She soon reached the other bank, stretched out her arm and her rake, and drew toward her a long stem crowned with a fine flower of silvery whiteness. She hung her rake on the branches of a willow, and, using both her hands, detached the flower, which she gazed at in delight, as she said aloud—"How beautiful you are, especially because you are stolen property !"

At these words she pressed it to her lips. Then

she regained the left bank, climbed up the slope, and hastened to put on her shoes and stockings. When this was accomplished, and she was about to go away, she saw that she had left her rake on the other bank, where at the same moment she perceived a handsome young man had sprung out of the earth, and was bowing respectfully.

She uttered a cry of terror, and her first impulse was to run away. Unfortunately, she had not taken three steps when a gust of wind seized her straw hat, the strings of which were not tied, and carried it into the Limourde. She stopped in great embarrassment. Lionel had already seized the rake, by the aid of which he fished the hat out of the river as it was being carried away by the current ; after which he posted himself opposite Mlle. de Saligneux, and said to her :

"Have I the honor of addressing Mlle. de Saligneux ?"

"Possibly," she returned, without perceiving the superhuman effort he had been forced to make in order to utter, in a calm tone, and without the air of a fool, the question on which his fate depended. She added, "In my turn, may I inquire who does me the honor of addressing me ?"

"M. Lionel Têterol," he replied.

"Very well ! M. Lionel Têterol, have the kindness to return to me what you have taken from me."

"Presently, mademoiselle," he replied gravely. "But, in the first place, pray explain how this rake happened to be here : did it come alone ?"

"I assure you, monsieur, that it belongs to me."

"And can you assure me, mademoiselle, that the lily which you hold in your hand also belongs to you?"

"So you recognized your lily at once!" she exclaimed. "That does not surprise me, monsieur: your family are fanatics on the subject of property. If a hundred lilies were placed before you, you would say, without stopping to think, 'That is mine!' Oh! what a fortunate faculty! And what if I were to refuse to return this charming lily, which belongs to you, would you send a sheriff to claim it? Probably. sheriffs are plentiful in this country."

"No, mademoiselle, I should not send a sheriff, but I should retain precious possession of this hat."

"Come, be generous; give it back without asking anything in return. Why do you care to see this poor flower again?"

"In the first place, because it belongs to me; in the next place, because you plucked it."

"Very pretty!" she exclaimed. "Sentiment, poetry! I was not aware that poetic grain grew in this country."

"Everything comes here, everything grows here, mademoiselle, the moment you arrive."

She made him a deep courtesy, and after a pause—"I have been awkward; I have allowed myself to be caught; I must take the consequences. But how shall we manage to exchange property? We cannot throw it across the river."

"You forget that there is a bridge two hundred paces from here."

"And you, monsieur, forget that the bridge has

been condemned, and closed by a barrier which is grated, latticed, bolted, and chained."

"I will climb over it."

"At your own risk and peril," said she.

At these words they descended, one on the right, the other on the left bank of the Limourde, and arrived simultaneously at the two ends of the bridge. It was there that the fathers had had their first interview, and there the children had their first *tête-à-tête*.

Lionel crossed the barrier without any great difficulty. Mlle. de Saligneux advanced to meet him; but, changing her mind, she retreated a few steps.

"One moment, monsieur," she said: "a scruple, an uneasy thought occurs to me. Is this bridge yours or mine?"

"I believe it is yours."

"You think so, but you must be sure of it. Just consider, the question is important. If I were so unfortunate as to set foot in the empire of the Têterols, the sheriffs would certainly come after me. I tell you they abound here!"

And instantly changing her face and her tone she added, with the gravity of an accomplished diplomat, "Ah, monsieur, could we not between us invent some means of putting an end to these wretched lawsuits, which annoy those who lose them, and add nothing to the glory of those who gain them?"

She looked straight in his eyes, and he felt a transport of joy. He was on the point of answering: "You know very well what the means are; they have been invented for us, and you have given them your

approval. For my part, you must know that for the last quarter of an hour I have thought them admirable."

He had not time to open his mouth. She exclaimed, suddenly, "Really, monsieur, it seems to me that I have seen you before."

"I am sure of it."

"Where?"

"Guess."

"Eh! yes, it was in the wood, one day when I fell from my horse." She blushed as she uttered these words; she recollected that he had taken her foot in order to replace her in the saddle, and at the same moment she remembered that she had been barefoot a short time before.

"What were you doing under that chestnut-tree?" she demanded, in a queenly tone.

"I was sleeping soundly."

"And when did you awake?"

"Excuse me; before answering that question, I must put one to you."

"Decidedly, you have a genius for barter. 'Give and take.' I see that we shall not get through our lawsuits so very soon. Well, go on."

"I am dying with curiosity to know who Théodore is."

She made a gesture of astonishment. "Théodore! Who told you anything about Théodore?"

"You, mademoiselle."

"I! you are dreaming."

"I am not dreaming. The day I had the honor of

meeting you in the Avenue des Poteaux, did you not say to the person who accompanied you, and consequently to me, as I was listening, 'Théodore is the cause of my accident ; I was thinking of him when I fell from my horse ?' "

She burst into a peal of laughter. "So you want to know who Théodore is ? Well ! Théodore—"

She could say no more. A sharp voice cried, "Claire, where are you ?"

"I am coming, aunt," replied Mlle. de Saligneux ; and, throwing the lily to Lionel, she seized her hat and rake and fled.

Lionel fled also, like a man who has a great happiness to hide, for joy makes a man run as well as fear. He was almost beside himself. Chance had signally favored him, and had by a single stroke saved him from the most cruel distress of mind. He was as happy as a gold-digger who has found a vein, or a beggar who hears that he has drawn a great prize ; as much touched as a shipwrecked man who arrives miraculously in port ; as much surprised as a child who has fallen asleep crying for the moon, and finds it under his pillow when he awakes. He wanted to embrace somebody or something. He recollected that he held in his hand a lily which Mlle. de Saligneux had touched with her lips, and he drank the kiss she had left there ; this was the only folly he committed, for there were laborers working in the field near by. As for feeling astonished or scandalized at the strange facility with which Mlle. de Saligneux had made up her mind to marry a man whom

she had never seen, he did not see it again in that light. He invented the wildest arguments to justify her conduct. She had had presentiments, feelings, without being influenced in her decision by any interested motives ; her look, her beauty, bore witness to the perfect nobility of her sentiments. Lionel was in love, and love is unreasonable : every sort of incoherence is permissible ; the absurd is love's kingdom.

M. Têterol returned on the stroke of six ; he was never a minute late. He entered the dining-room, the floor creaked under his boots, and he met his son with a cold shake of the hand. During the whole of dinner he had the sombre, gloomy, ferocious air of a Krupp cannon, loaded to the muzzle and ready to go off. When coffee was served, he emptied his cup at a single gulp, and dismissed Joseph. Then, placing on the table, as was his habit, his heavy hands, which crushed everything they came in contact with, and his iron-clad elbows, that had made a broad road for him through the human throng, and fixing on his heir eyes in which could be seen his idea burning and glowing like a forge-fire, he said to him in a jerky tone :

“ Well ! Lionel, have you reflected ? ”

The flies which were buzzing around them apparently became dumb, feeling the gravity of the occasion, and a dead silence reigned throughout the room. Lionel did not answer for two minutes, and the two minutes seemed two centuries to his father. At length the young man said :

"Yes, I have reflected. I will do what you wish."

M. Têterol's face grew purple, and he drew his handkerchief from his pocket to wipe his temples, which were damp with joy.

"All is for the best!" he exclaimed. "I knew well, Lionel, that you were a sensible fellow. You have made your little calculations, and you have perceived that your father is right. I am always right; it is my oldest habit. That is what comes of reflection. You have discovered that it is no slight advantage to an ambitious fellow to have a Saligneux in his baggage. These gentry have fine connections; there are marquises in the family, and all these people uphold each other; they have a genius for intrigue. They will have a great deal of influence for a long time to come, even under a republican government. Just look at my lawsuits, for example! They needed but to whisper a word in the judge's ear, and it is discovered that their warren-rabbits have not eaten my cabbages. People are so stupid! And then, I have already told you that this dissipated baron will not live to a great age, and he has no male posterity to whom to bequeath his title. It might happen at his death ——"

"Let us say no more about it," interrupted Lionel, "I have promised to do as you wish."

"On the contrary, we will speak of it," said M. Têterol. "I assure you that this marriage is a great stroke of luck for you. The young lady is very young and inexperienced, but she already has a great deal of

sense and discretion. She will help you to make your way. I know all about her from M. Crépin."

"Who is M. Crépin?" asked Lionel.

"A rascal. And you need not think that Mlle. de Saligneux is frightfully ugly; I only hinted at that to enrage you. You can easily believe that I should not care to have a monster for my daughter-in-law. You shall see her. I have just met the baron; we have arranged everything, and I am to introduce you to-morrow. Mon Dieu! I do not say that she is a Venus—"

"I beg that you will say no more about it," interrupted Lionel once more, as his father continued to torture him by persisting in his praises of Mlle. de Saligneux, as if he were determined to disgust him with his happiness.

The obstinate old man never released his prey. He rose, and walked around the table in order to sit down beside his son. He opened the box of cigars with his own hand, offered him one, and gave him a light by scraping a match on the sole of his boot.

As Lionel smoked—"Forgive me, my boy," he continued, "I was rather rough with you yesterday evening. Bon Dieu! You were cherishing a fancy in your heart; I understand you. You will acknowledge that I never teased you on the subject. Love affairs are very pleasant, except when they interfere with serious affairs! So the other is very pretty? Eh! beauty passes so quickly; it is a meal for the sun. That is all that remains of beauty." And he breathed on his fingers, as one breathes on a thistle to

make the down fly. The down gone, nothing remains but the prickles. "Lovers," he continued, "imagine that there is only one woman in the world ; there are thousands and thousands. It is not the most beautiful, but the most useful, that a man ought to marry. You are a serious man ; you are a strong man. I already see you in the saddle with your princess behind you. Trot, nag ! I will furnish the oats—"

"For the love of God, say no more about it," exclaimed Lionel again, to whom his father's metaphors seemed more objectionable even than his angry words.

At this moment Joseph announced the Abbé Miraud, who had come to pay his respects to the heir.

"Come in, M. le Curé," cried M. Téterol. "I present to you my Prince of Wales. Is he not well built ? And to think that I saw him when he was no taller than my boot ! Did I tell you that he is named Lionel after you ? He is a godson who will do you credit, but you will never make a priest of him. He and I have the same opinions, the same heart, the same will."

"You mean yours, M. Téterol," replied the abbé, smiling with the air of a timid man, who is resolved to make a bold venture.

"Mine ! mine ! but I tell you they are his too !" replied M. Téterol. And he added, as he passed his large fingers through his son's chestnut locks, "you will not spoil my Prince of Wales, whatever you do. He knows too well what he owes to me. And may the devil take me if I regret all I have spent on his education ! Look well at the boy, M. le Curé : he is

the best of my investments, he brings in twenty per cent."

Lionel took advantage of the first opportunity to leave his father and the abbé together, and retired to his room. Happiness produces sleepless nights: Lionel hardly slept that night. It seemed to him as though a robber would come out of the sky before morning and deprive him of his treasure, and he was anxious to shut it up under lock and key.

He rose at daybreak, and wrote the two following lines to M. Pointal:

"My dear sir, consider my letter null and void. I have seen Mlle. de Saligneux."

XII.

ARE we to believe that M. Têterol wittingly lied to his son? or shall we admit that he had allowed himself to be taken in by the vague assurances of the baron, who had been laughing at him? The fact is, that the latter had not said a word to his daughter concerning the singular propositions which he had received from his neighbor, and the half promise he had given him. Mlle. de Saligneux had no suspicion that they thought of marrying her; she was absolutely ignorant of the event in preparation. If it had been otherwise, it is probable that she would have been occupied in something very different from taking off her shoes and stockings to steal lilies.

M. de Saligneux had several reasons for not saying anything to his daughter. In the first place, he had acquired a habit of putting off until the last moment a debate on any subject which was unpleasant to him. When disagreeable things happened, he preferred bearing to discussing them. And then, before explaining his intentions to his daughter, he wished to know himself what they were ; and, to tell the truth, he did not know as yet what he meant to do. Marry his daughter below his rank in society ! give her to the son of a Têterol ! At this thought, he had at first given way to fits of indignation, rebellious movements of the heart, which expressed themselves in starts. The reader will not doubt the fact, when he learns that the baron possessed a very fine collection of canes, and among the number a superb, supple stick, with an agate handle, which had been given him by one of his mistresses. He had not used it for a long time in his walks, but was saving it for a special occasion. During the days which followed his interview with Têterol, he had begun to contemplate this cane with a sort of tenderness, and to say to it, " You will have a glorious ending : I will break you over M. Têterol's back." Many times he felt a wild desire to rush to the White House, execute his *coup*, and say to the insolent fellow, after he had beaten him, " Now, my dear sir, buy my château ; the chagrin which I shall feel at seeing it in your villainous hands will be sufficiently repaid by the pure and truly celestial joy which I have just tasted." He had done nothing of the sort, and the cane was still intact.

The Baron de Saligneux's conscience had gone through a good deal, and had lost its angles, its stiffness, and its purity. It resembled those women who can no longer keep account of their adventures ; it is only the first which creates a stir ; the rest are unimportant accidents, which are soon forgotten. The result was that the baron's fits of disgust did not last long. In a life of irregular habits and expedients, the first faculty lost is that of long-continued indignation. A man's back becomes pliable, and he gets used to low doors. To tell the truth, he begins by flying into a passion with them, he hurls insults at them ; and then he makes himself very small, bends his head, and passes through. This is why the cane with the agate handle was not yet broken in two.

M. de Saligneux had by degrees come to the point of uttering softly, and even aloud, phrases which began as follows : " But after all," " taking all things into consideration," " on the whole." These are exclamations which pave the way for acquiescence, or a disregard of conscience. " After all," thought he, " this insolent peasant is my creditor ; he is enormously rich, and his vanity equals his riches. If I say no he will have no pity. If I say yes, perhaps I shall be able to get from him whatever I like. Let us not decide hastily ; let us examine, let us view things from every point ; let us try to see the favorable side of the affair, and to reconcile honor with the comforts of life." The baron recalled a remark of one of his friends, who had said to him one day : " My dear fellow, this world is so constituted that it is extremely difficult to swallow

a glass of wine which does not contain a fly. If the wine is good and the fly not too large, it is better to drink." The baron had learned to drink. It is true that, this time, the fly was enormous, as large as a Têterol. Nevertheless, he did not make faces at his wine-glass. He was accustomed to make a great distinction between the points on which it is allowable to yield and those where any concession is dishonorable. Marrying one's daughter to the son of a corsair, in order to obtain better terms, is an act which can be committed, if necessary, without a man ceasing to be a gentleman. What constitutes a gentleman is, in the first place, his deportment, and in the next, the orthodoxy of his opinions. M. de Saligneux had always possessed the deportment, and his opinions were irreproachable.

Moreover, he brought his daughter's interest and his paternal solicitude into the question of the capitulation of his pride: he persuaded himself that he had played the part of a good father in not repulsing resolutely the unsuitable and absurd proposition of M. Têterol. Mlle. de Saligneux's personal fortune had amounted to very little, and under the baron's loose guardianship this small sum was reduced to next to nothing. It was not without uneasiness that he saw the day of reckoning drawing near, for he feared that his accounts would not appear so orthodox as his opinions. As for the inheritance of the Marquis de Virevielle, who had more than once announced his resolution of leaving his entire fortune to his grand-niece, it was but a slender hope. Mlle. de Saligneux could

have borne witness herself to the fact that her great uncle's establishment was kept up in the simplest manner; that he rarely received, kept no carriage; and rode in the wood on hired horses. On his side the baron's appeals to the old man's liberality had always been in vain, and all he had obtained was eloquent sermons on economy, temperance, and the habit of moderating his desires, which takes the place of riches. From all which he had concluded that, if his daughter inherited an income of fifteen or twenty thousand livres from the marquis, it would be a wonder; and what is an income of fifteen or twenty thousand livres? In his opinion, the first condition of happiness for a woman is a luxurious life. He was fully convinced that luxury was the first requisite for his daughter, and he believed her to be too sensible not to understand that, in her situation, she could not expect a good match except at the price of a misalliance. Perhaps she would look on M. Têterol's money as one of the sovereign balms which cure all the wounds of self-love, and on caning as one of the antiquated expedients unsuitable for this century.

The simplest way was to ask her; but this examination was a delicate business, and the baron waited until affairs should come to a crisis before beginning it. Living from hand to mouth, enjoying the respite granted by M. Têterol, busied with the calculations which lulled to sleep his remorse, and the remorse which disturbed his calculations, he only sought to obtain a delay. He called chance to his assistance, and caressed the wild hope that he should hear some

morning that his inexorable creditor had been seized with a fit of apoplexy, and was dead. Alas ! not only was his creditor incapable of paying him this delicate attention, but he had become pressing, and had extorted a promise that the two young people should be introduced to each other before the middle of September. The middle of September was at hand ; the baron found himself on the brink of the ditch, and he must make the leap.

The explanation which he was about to have with his daughter appeared so unpleasant to him that he would have willingly charged a third party with it ; but he had no one at hand who was capable of rendering him this service. Certainly, it was not to his sister, the Countess de Juines, who was much older than he, that he could apply ; she was the last person in the world to whom he would have ventured to broach such a subject. Mme. de Juines, a tall, dry, thin, but handsome woman, was a devotee, and did not trifle with principles. M. Têterol, who had seen her once, and whose eyes still preserved the memory of that dazzling spectacle, called her an old shrew. Nevertheless, she was a very respectable person, although she had a sin on her conscience. She was still Mlle. de Saligneux when the news arrived of the Revolution of July, and she had taken a vow not to leave her room until the usurper had restored the crown to the legitimate king. She kept her word for six years : for six summers and six winters she shut herself up as closely as a Carmelite nun ; but one morning, yielding to the entreaties of her family, she took flight,

and emerged from her seclusion to marry M. de Juines. She would have done better to remain at home that day. M. de Juines was dissipated, and she had small cause to congratulate herself on him. Happily for her, she hardly saw him ten times a year ; and, still more happily, he died of indigestion in the flower of his age.

The conjugal trials of the Countess de Juines had not lowered her pride. Her ancestors filled her heart and her mouth ; she wore all the glories of the Saligneux entwined about her brow, and she hardly moved her head when she talked, because she feared she would cause her crown of hereditary virtues to fall. When she was seated, her back never touched the back of her chair ; when she traveled on the railway, she never allowed herself to lean back and sleep, and she got out of the carriage in the morning just as she had entered it, without a wrinkle in her black bombazine dress, without having disarranged a hair. Mme. de Juines never laid aside her majesty of demeanor : from the dim past, all the crusades eyed her ; and, knowing that she was observed, she never forgot her part. She was the incarnation of all principles and all propriety. Therefore she was a severe censor of the conduct of her brother ; she lectured him severely on the errors of his youth, although she she did not know of the tenth part of them. It should be added that she was as severe toward herself as toward others. She was often absent-minded, absorbed in a review of her past. During these hours of reflection, she reproached herself for what she

called her fault—an unfortunate expression, which might have misled ill-informed people. She was persuaded that her fault had had the gravest consequences ; that the fires, hail, inundations, earthquakes—all disorders of nature, all the catastrophes of history—were a just vengeance which heaven was taking for the shortcomings of a Saligneux who had broken the most sacred of pledges. Why had she left her room before the king reascended the throne ? When the Prussians besieged Paris, the Countess de Juines flattered herself sadly that she had a hand in it ; and, if M. Têterol existed, it was another punishment for her fault. She looked on Têterol as the minister of celestial wrath, as an Attila, as the scourge of God. But, although her imagination was active, she had no suspicion of the unheard-of plan cherished by that monster. If she had suspected it, she would have made such a noise that no one could have heard himself speak for ten leagues around. M. de Saligneux had observed an absolute discretion from prudential motives. Mme. de Juines had one comfortable side : it was easy to keep things from her ; she asked but few questions, because she had an extraordinary opinion of her powers of penetration, and thought she knew everything. Moreover, anything could be discussed before her without compromising the parties : she was very deaf, and it was necessary to shout a secret into her ear before she could guess it.

The baron was accustomed to put a good face on matters. However embarrassed he might have felt by the proposals with which he was about to regale

his daughter, he was charming during dinner. He drank a little more than usual, grew gay, and told rather daring stories. Madame de Juines did not deign to ask for a repetition, and Mlle. de Saligneux listened to them with pleasure. She knew enough to be amused, too little to be shocked. She had employed her years in the convent in asking herself a mass of questions, to which she gave answers which were more or less odd, and the eighteen months which she had passed with her great uncle in ascertaining whether her answers were correct. Her curiosity had already traveled round the world, but her innocence had gathered only flowers.

One of her father's stories made her burst into peals of laughter, and Mme. de Juines, emerging from her revery, remarked dryly :

"What is the matter? What is it? What are your laughing at, mademoiselle?"

"Nothing, aunt."

"Does a young girl who respects herself allow herself to laugh at the top of her voice? Does a sensible young girl permit herself to laugh without knowing why? Patrice, your daughter is a perfect savage; her education should be recommenced."

"I will occupy myself with it on the spot, and reprimand her severely," replied M. de Saligneux.

And with a frowning brow, and a grave, almost tragic air, he began a story which was still more daring than the last. Claire laughed more violently than ever, and brought down a fresh remonstrance from her aunt, who did not spare either of them. The thing

of all others that displeased the countess most, the thing which irritated her most, was her niece's gayety ; and her niece was always gay, particularly when conversing with her father. She thought him very nice ; that was her expression. She knew enough not to take him in earnest ; she was not ignorant of his follies, and the Marquis de Virevielle had often said to her, " My poor child, your father is fast ; your father is a spendthrift ; your father will reduce you to poverty." And she answered, " Possibly, but don't talk ill of him, he is so nice ! "

She thought him quite capable of reducing her to poverty ; but she was persuaded that he would do it without any bad intentions, through giddiness, through negligence ; and that, moreover, when she was reduced to a pallet, he would cut capers which would amuse her. She had a great deal of tolerance, of indulgence for him, in default of an impossible respect ; she looked on him as an irresponsible being, at the mercy of his fancies, and condemned to commit follies, as fatally and as innocently as an apple-tree produces apples. What amused her most was the solemn air which he assumed, on occasion, to recall her to a sense of her duty. She was sure that when he preached he had some great sin on his conscience, or was plotting one. On such occasions she had a way of looking at him which destroyed his gravity. She treated him like an amiable serpent. She compared him also to one of those pretty roads bordered with flowering eglantines, but in which one meets puddles and holes. It is pleasant to walk in them, but one has some difficulty

in getting out of them, and sometimes one has to stay there.

After dinner they installed themselves in a handsome drawing-room, of oblong shape, where the baron had a good fire kindled, the room being damp and the evening rather cool. Mme. de Juines seated herself in her easy-chair, and began to embroider an altar-cloth, shut up in herself, alone with her needle, her deafness, and her conscience. The baron and his daughter placed themselves near the chimney with its carved mantel-piece, and remained some time without uttering a word.

Each time that Claire returned to Saligneux, she made as complete an inventory inside as she did outside ; she was always afraid of finding something gone ; she had had such disagreeable surprises of that sort ! As she leaned back in her low chair, she cast her eyes into every corner of the room : the walls decorated in stucco ; the coffered ceiling of walnut wood with gilded mouldings ; the windows, whose fastenings were perfect masterpieces of metal-work ; the spaces over the doors painted with cupids and emblems ; the family portraits, equestrian and otherwise ; the ancient furniture in Beauvais tapestry ; a commode in marquetry, and coffer of ebony. Then, bringing her eyes back to the chimney, she observed that the mantel had retained its cartouch and medallion, that the uprights still had all their beautifully engraved brasses ; but she suddenly remembered that there had formerly been on the mantel a curious clock ornamented with antique cameos which had been transformed into a modern time-piece, and two handsome vases in Sèvres biscuit, one of

which, with the clock, had disappeared. When M. de Saligneux went to Paris, in the vain hope of negotiating a loan, he had taken the clock and the vase, under the pretense that they needed repairs ; he had not brought them back, probably having sent them to the auction-room.

"What has become of your clock?" asked Mlle. de Saligneux.

"Ah ! don't mention it, my dear," said the baron. "Clocks have their diseases ; one morning it was carried off."

Claire pointed to the Sèvres vase, saying, "Where is the other?"

"Alas ! we are all mortal," sighed he.

She did not press her questions further ; there was nothing left for her to learn. She stretched her feet out on the andirons and plunged into reflections, which she confided to no one, preferring to keep them to herself. After a long silence—

"What a pretty foot you have, my dear," said the baron.

"You think so?"

"I have never seen one smaller or better formed."

"And God knows how much experience you have had in such matters !"

"Ah ! not so much as you imagine," he replied modestly.

"The foot of an opera goddess is not to be compared to mine ?" she asked.

"I do not wish to make comparisons ; I say that yours is perfect !"

"I know some one who could speak from knowledge, having seen it much better than you will ever see it."

"Who is the happy mortal?"

"He was not a chiropodist."

"Who then?"

"Some one who saw it to-day, uncovered."

"Uncovered?"

"Bare," she replied, imprudently raising her voice, so that Mme. de Juines started, and, throwing up her head, exclaimed, "Mon Dieu! what are you saying? I think she said bare. Who is bare?"

"She was asking me," shouted the baron, "if it was easy to mount a bare-backed horse."

"Could you not employ more suitable expressions, mademoiselle?" returned Mme. de Juines.

"About a horse!" retorted Claire.

"Horse or not, there are words which are not employed in good society. You should have said undressed. When will you learn to be careful?"

Thereupon the countess resumed her embroidery, and M. de Saligneux said softly to his daughter, "Who had the precious privilege of seeing your foot bare, or undressed?"

"Guess. But no, you will never guess. A young man, the son of your mortal enemy, the ogre of the White House, M. Lionel Téterol."

"Ah! indeed. But how did it happen? You sent for him, and said to him deliberately, 'It is charming, just look!'"

"Let us understand each other: you were not told

that it was shown to him. The young man is a rogue, who pretends to sleep and does not sleep at all."

And Mlle. de Saligneux recounted to her father, in detail, the whole adventure of the lily. M. de Saligneux listened with delight, thanking Heaven for having undertaken the burden of procuring him an opening, which he had been seeking in vain for the last hour.

When she had finished her story—"So," he said to her, "you have seen this phoenix to-day with your own eyes?"

"What phoenix?"

"M. Lionel Têterol."

"How is he a phoenix?"

"He is a young man who is not only remarkable, but exceptional, extraordinary, quite extraordinary—endowed with the finest faculties, worthy of the best position, for whom all the notaries in Paris agree in predicting the finest career and a superb future. You did not suspect it?"

"I assure you that, as I looked at the extraordinary young man, I did not read his great career in his brow. It is true that the river ran between us."

"But he pleased you?"

"He did not displease me. He undertook to prove to me that a Têterol, by taking pains, could be decorous, polite, and even gallant."

"That does not surprise me; he is charming. The notaries affirm it; I saw their letter; there were even passages which I was made to read twice. The fact is that this handsome blonde, whom the women are

wild over, has a noble heart, a soul of the most exquisite delicacy, and rare elevation of sentiment—in short, all the qualities fitted to make a family happy.”

He expatiated on the subject. She listened to him at first with a smile on her lips. She thought he was in earnest, and became serious in her turn. She drew her foot off the andirons, sat upright, folded her arms, and, gazing fixedly at her father, who dared not look at her, she said :

“ Ah ! while walking in the road bordered with flowering eglantine, have I put my foot in a hole ? ”

“ What do you mean ? ”

“ You praise this young man a great deal ; do you entertain any intention of making me marry him ? ”

“ Come, that is an idea,” he replied, striking his forehead ; “ a rather odd idea, to be sure, but after all, a pretty good one, for— Are you prejudiced ? I am not ; I belong to my century, and one ought to belong to his century. A great philosopher, with whom I entertain agreeable relations which contribute to the happiness of my life, said to me the other day, ‘ Everywhere is to be heard the sound of sabots advancing and of varnished boots retreating.’ ” Nothing can be more true ; these people are advancing and we are retreating. It is a great pity, for the world is a charming place. Old France has but one means of prolonging her existence : it is to marry new France ; for, as to burying herself in her regrets, it is a villainous burial, and a tomb ought at least to be comfortable. If we are not careful, my dear, we

shall find ourselves in an impossible situation, and a man's first duty is to be in an easy position."

"Ah! if my aunt could hear you!" said she.

"Thank God, she cannot hear. I love and venerate her with all my heart; but, of all impossible beings, she is the most impossible. Just look at her: what does she look like? A bunch of feathers from a hearse, while M. Lionel Têterol—"

"Again! Once for all, tell me whether you are serious or jesting."

"Eh! jesting, of course, and yet— One must be courageous with one's opinions. My very sincere opinion is that handsome Lionel is an admirable match."

"For a Saligneux?"

"Certainly."

"Don't utter enormities."

"I see no enormity in the affair, except the millions of M. Têterol—Jean the first, Jean the only; and I know for a certainty that he intends to make a superb settlement on his son when he marries."

"I am prejudiced enough to think that M. Têterol's millions are not necessary to my happiness."

"Bah! it is well enough to say that; but the happiness of women has become so complicated, so costly! Rich soil, a great deal of rich soil, is required for these flowers which embellish our existence. Besides, you have confessed that this young man pleases you."

"In the quality of a young man whom one meets on the banks of a river; but, from the moment when

it becomes a question of marriage, he has a serious, unpardonable defect."

"What is that?"

"He is his father's son, and I am persuaded that he resembles him, that he inherits something of his disposition."

"Come now, be serious. If I were to propose to you to marry him, what would you answer?"

She unfolded her arms, and exclaimed in a firm, resolute voice, "I should answer that a Saligneux was not made to marry the son of a Têterol."

The Countess de Juines started again. "What is it?" she inquired. "I really think she is speaking of M. Têterol. Patrice, you have forgotten to inform her that there are expressions which are not used in good society."

Mlle. de Saligneux ran to her aunt, and shouted into her ear, "I was telling my father that M. Têterol is an abominable man, and his son the same."

"What is that? his son! He has a son then? If such people take to having sons, what will become of us? And to think that the wretches possess to-day fields which used to belong to the Saligneux! to think that they gather the vintage of the Saligneux! I was looking at that poor vineyard a short time ago; it had the air of a race-horse which feels a common stable-boy on his back."

The Countess de Juines's eyesight was as piercing as M. Têterol's. The one perceived with his naked eye the mortgages which burdened the château de Saligneux; the other did not need to look twice at a

vineyard in order to discover that it felt profoundly humiliated and sorry at being obliged to furnish wine to the Têterols.

"And where will these wretches stop?" she pursued, speaking more to the point than she thought. "They will not be content until they have taken everything from us. They aspire to live in the château of the Saligneux, to eat from the Saligneux silver, and to sleep in the beds of the Saligneux."

"They will never sleep there, aunt, I will answer for that," said her niece.

"You will answer for that? Claire, your sentiment is good; but I do not know how it happens that there is always something improper in your remarks."

"But, aunt, I only repeated what you had just said."

"You forget, mademoiselle, that I am almost sixty, and that it is proper for me to say a great many things which you are not permitted even to understand. A girl of your age, who respects herself, ought not to know that such people as Têterol are in existence."

Mlle. de Saligneux returned to her father, and making an effort to meet his eye, which avoided hers, she said, "So M. Têterol had the effrontery to make this proposal to you, and you were so culpably weak as to accept it."

"Ah! excuse me; I made your consent a condition."

"Explain yourself: how did it come to pass?"

"It is your fault. You met that wretch one day:

in spite of what is said, he has a tender heart, and your charms produced an ineffaceable impression on him. He dreamed of them and lost his head over them, and ended by confessing to me that he was dying with a desire to marry you. Ah! of course I said no, no emphatically. 'Well!' he replied, 'if she can't be my wife, let her at least be my daughter-in-law; but she must be connected with me in some way!'"

"Do not jest any more, if you please. I am not in a humor for laughing. This man must have some hold upon you. I beg you to tell me what that hold is."

"Must I tell you? The hold a creditor has over his debtor," returned M. de Saligneux, piteously, dropping his head.

"You have borrowed money from him?"

"God forbid! He played a frightful trick on me."

"Tell me the truth, the whole truth; I will know it," she answered, quickly.

Driven to the wall, the baron began his confession, and assuming an attitude of humiliation, and a voice as modest as his countenance, he decided to tell his daughter all that had passed between M. Têterol and himself: the transfer of the two notes, his vain journey to Paris, his return to Saligneux, his visit to the White House—everything down to the counter-deed. She stood listening to him, leaning against the chimney, with contracted brows and quivering nostrils. She looked steadily at a porcelain figure which she had taken in her hand, and it seemed to her that

her life, which had formerly appeared so beautiful to her, had suddenly become as ugly, as ungraceful, as repulsive, as a Chinese grimace.

When he had finished, she said, in a dull voice : " So there is a law which authorizes creditors to seize upon the daughters of their debtors, and another law which authorizes the debtors to hand over their daughters without consulting them ? "

Then, carried away with indignation, she exclaimed violently, " Ah ! father, you have sold me ! " and she threw the porcelain figure on the floor, where it was shattered to fragments.

Mme. de Juines saw the gesture and the broken figure. She dropped her needle, and started from her seat, saying, " Is she going mad, Patrice ? What is the matter with her ? "

" Nothing," answered the baron. " A storm is brewing, and she has a nervous attack to-day."

" She is not twenty, and she has nerves ? " replied the countess. " But, Patrice, she is making a scene. I begin to believe that she frequents the second-rate theatres."

" Be indulgent, sister," said the baron, " she is not quite in her right mind."

" What is a Saligneux who is not in her right mind ? What is a Saligneux who makes scenes ? Good God ! what an education ! You will tell me that she had no mother ; but did she not spend five years in the convent ? And this is the fine result ! It is true that she always lived with men before that, as well as since."

"And with very dangerous men," exclaimed Mlle. de Saligneux, pointing to her father.

"Another impropriety," cried the countess, more majestic than the three judges in Hades, Minos, Æacus, and Rhadamanthus. "It will not be the last."

"Excuse me, aunt," said Claire. "I feel seriously indisposed, and shall go to bed."

"She will go to bed ! It is certainly the very best thing she can do, but her language is always shocking. In what century do we live ? Respect is disappearing."

"I shall disappear too," said Mlle. de Saligneux to her father. And lighting a candle, she left the room. He ran after her, and, on the pretext of assisting her, caught her in the middle of the staircase, and turning her round abruptly, said :

"Really, for a sensible girl, you surprise me. What ! you cannot have thought I was in earnest ? Did you not see that I was trying you ? Do you imagine that I would consent to marry you to a Têterol ! It is true that I gave my word to that block-head ; but I must assert, upon my honor, that never, never had I any intention of keeping it."

"It would have been better not to give it."

"What would you have ? All the art of politics consists in promising and breaking one's word ; ask Prince Bismarck, ask Prince Gortchakoff, ask any one you like. We shall be rid of him by selling Saligneux."

Claire's face lengthened. "Sell Saligneux, my dear Saligneux !" said she. "It would be more than a misfortune, it would be a disgrace."

"Ah, my dear, we must choose between the two. If these old walls are indispensable to your happiness, resign yourself to marrying the extraordinary young man."

"Never!" said she.

"And I say as you do, never! Now, have I said it right, yes or no? And when we have sold these old walls, I shall not be uneasy about your fate; you have a retreat assured to you by M. de Virevielle. As for me, I do not know what will become of me; but don't worry your brains about that. I will hire myself to the keeper of a menagerie, to the director of some strolling show, that he may shelter me in his tent, and that he may exhibit to the loungers the last of the Saligneux, front and back, full face and profile."

"Be quiet," said she; "these jests hurt me."

And she precipitately ascended several steps. He called to her, and she turned round.

"You are angry with me, naughty girl; you are going off without kissing me."

She descended to him, but did not kiss him.

"After all," said he, "is it my fault that we are not millionaires?"

"M. de Virevielle says it is; that you are a great sinner, a criminal; that you have every vice."

"Charming old man! And you believe all that?"

"All."

"Celestial goodness! what can I do to regain your good graces, to recover your good-will? Wait—an inspiration occurs to me," he added, assuming an air

of improvising a solution which he had long meditated, and which he had held in reserve in case his overtures were not favorably received. "According to the terms of that cursed counter-deed, I bound myself to reimburse M. Têterol on demand, or within the week following the rupture of the marriage-contract ; but the case provided for is a refusal on your part or mine. If the match were to fall through for some other cause, for which I am not responsible, I should have four years in which to free myself ; and in four years one can look about, find resources and expedients. Not to marry the remarkable young man, and not to sell Saligneux—that would be perfect diplomacy ! Could you not discover some means of disgusting this pearl of doctors of law, this mirror of chivalry, this masterpiece of nature and art—could you not make him reject you ? It is a difficult undertaking, you are so pretty ! but could you not invent some means ? Be adroit ; what is the use of being a woman if one is not so ?"

"Well, we will see," said she. And, taking her father's head between her hands, she said : "Was I not right to call you an agreeable serpent ? But to-day you have more of the serpent about you than of agreeability."

At these words she kissed his forehead, or, rather, she bit it, for her teeth left a mark.

When she reached her room, she sat down at the foot of her bed, and while taking down her hair she gave way to the most melancholy reflections. Suddenly she exclaimed, "Ah ! Théodore, Théodore !"

Soon she smiled, saying, "That is an idea ; I must for once make use of Théodore."

A quarter of an hour later she was sleeping soundly. By the favor of Heaven, the last heiress of the Saligneux had smiles and sleep at her command.

XIII.

ON the 12th of September, at three o'clock in the afternoon, M. Têterol opened a little gate with a large key, and traversed the bridge over the Limourde, accompanied by his son. A white cravat encircled his bull-neck, and rather strangled him. He wore a perfectly new black-cloth coat, ordered for the occasion, and in which he found himself under restraint. New clothes always made him uncomfortable. Not only was he very corpulent, but, when he thought of certain things, his chest expanded until all the seams in his clothing cracked. The tailors never had enough cloth to clothe Jean Têterol's pride.

He was in too high a state of good-humor that day to complain either of his cravat, or his coat, or his tailor, or his shoes, which were too tight, or of anybody. Never had his countenance been so clear, his lips so smiling ; shimmers of happiness ran through his heavy, grizzled eyebrows. All along the road he hummed the air of "Malbrouc." As he passed the bridge he could not resist the pleasure of pushing a stone which was loose with his cane, and sending it into the river ; and he said to Lionel :

"That is the way the gentry keep up their property. We will render them the service of mending their bridges."

The Countess de Juines did not see him. If she had seen with her eyes M. Têterol crossing the bridge, and if she had once suspected the object of his visit to the château, perhaps she would have lost her reason, perhaps she would have been driven to some extremity ; but she would certainly have groaned over the deplorable consequences of her fault, and reproached Heaven for the excess of its vengeance. Fortunately Mme. de Juines was absent. The baron had taken the precaution of getting her out of the way. He had represented to her that the weather was magnificent, and begged her to go for a drive, to pay a visit to the sisters of St. Mary, with whom she was in the habit of exchanging little civilities and gossip.

If Mme. de Juines had been there, a sign from on high would have announced to her the approach of the enemy who aspired to sleep in the bed of the Saligneux. When Cæsar died, the sun grew dim, the Po overflowed its banks, the statues shed tears of blood, phantoms walked the streets, and the forests resounded with dismal howls. The sun did not grow dim, neither did any wolf howl, as M. Têterol crossed the Limourde. Nevertheless it is stated that on the 12th of September, 1875, at three o'clock precisely, something strange took place at Saligneux. A few minutes before the air was perfectly tranquil; suddenly a gust of wind bent the tops of the elms on the terrace, and

the walls of the château trembled. We dare not affirm that one of the gargoyles which surmounted the roof opened its doleful mouth several times ; that a long groan was heard in the vaults of the chapel where three Saligneux reposed, and that the cold ashes moved in their tomb. These prodigies might well be apocryphal ; but it is positive and notorious that the gust detached from the tower a large stone, which fortunately did not kill any one, and that a magnificent climbing-rose, reaching to the height of the machicolations of a tower, shook down all its blossoms, carpeting the ground, after which the wind subsided, as if by enchantment. Thus was announced on that memorable day the invasion of the barbarians, the avenging apparition of Attila, King of the Huns and scourge of God.

The Baron de Saligneux did not possess so lively an imagination as his sister ; he was incapable of seeing warning from heaven in a falling stone or a shower of roses : the gust of wind surprised but did not move him. M. Têterol had announced his visit for three o'clock ; the baron knew his formidable exactness, and he walked up and down a path in his park awaiting the enemy. As soon as he saw him appear in the distance, he advanced to meet him, his hat on one ear, a flower in his button-hole, and a switch in his hand.

M. Têterol stopped short and shouted to him, "Here he is at last, M. le Baron. What do you think of him ?"

The baron looked attentively at Lionel, who, after

having saluted him, fixed upon him his proud, piercing glance. "Ah, monsieur!" said he, "the voice of rumor had already published your praises. I believe this is the first time that rumor has not lied."

At these words he offered his hand, and bade him welcome. M. Têterol had walked on while they were talking; he had an idea in his brain, and was preparing a scene, which he was anxious should not fail. When he had reached the fruit-garden, which flanked the château on the right, he searched for something which he did not find. He pushed open a little lattice-gate, and entered the garden. He was looking for a pear-tree which no longer existed; but his eagle eye recognized the place where he had formerly seen it. He made a sign to M. de Saligneux and Lionel, and as soon as they had joined him—

"M. le Baron," he said, in his gruffest voice, "once upon a time there was a pear-tree here—I can still see it—a fine pyramidal pear-tree. At that time I was a little country laborer, an under-gardener, and very proud to be in the service of a Baron de Saligneux. And yet I never had any occasion to be delighted with your father's kindness. God forbid that I should speak ill of him! But he set up to know a great deal about horticulture, and he did not understand its first principles. I stick to what I have said, M. le Baron—he was ignorant of the first rudiments. He maintained that shears were better than a pruning-knife to trim fruit-trees. It is false, absolutely false. Everybody who understands the subject will tell you that shears mangle the branch they cut."

M. Têterol told this story of the pear-tree with as much animation and fire as though it had taken place the day before ; one might have said that the discussion had remained open for forty years. The man of eternal thoughts had no notion of time ; his wrath and his memories were always young.

"So," he continued, "I was occupied one day in cutting a shoot from this pear-tree, and was preparing to pick off the twigs, leaving them eight centimetres long. It was ten o'clock in the morning. Your father approached me, clad in an apple-green silk dressing-gown. He watched me for a few minutes. Then, drawing his hands from his pockets, he treated me like a pack-mule, an idiot, and accused me of crippling his tree. Why should I have crippled his tree ? I did not care one way or the other for the pear-tree ; I have never taken a great interest in the property of others ; but it has always been my principle to do well whatever I undertake. Your father gets angry, I reply. There—are you listening ?—he stood there, I was here—then he gave me a violent kick, which flung me against the tree."

M. Têterol burst into a noisy peal of laughter. Then he bridled up, strutted, placed his enormous hands on his powerful hips, and exclaimed :

"M. le Baron, what would your father have thought if, at the moment when he administered that little correction to me, some one had foretold to him that I should one day have a son who would marry his granddaughter ?"

Saying this, he puffed out his cheeks, and turned

his head to right and left, as if to take in at a glance the whole universe, which recognized in him its lord and master. M. de Saligneux listened to him, and as he listened he looked at his cane. It was the famous one with the agate handle, which he had resolved to break over M. Têterol's shoulders. Holding it by the middle, between his thumb and forefinger, he made it turn, twist, rise and fall ; and he felt it tremble between his fingers. At length, driving from him all evil thoughts, he replied in a soothing voice, and with an enchanting smile :

"M. Têterol, it is quite possible that my father did not understand how to trim fruit-trees, and that he was wrong in preferring shears to a pruning-knife. Still he was an intelligent man. If he could have foreseen that a kick adroitly applied would have one day such happy consequences for his family, he would certainly have repeated it, in order to make more sure of the effect."

All the time his father was speaking, Lionel had suffered from uneasiness mingled with confusion. He had tried to make himself small ; he tried to sink into the earth. M. de Saligneux's reply made him emerge abruptly, and he felt the color rush to his cheeks and ears. As for M. Têterol, he had fallen into a reverie ; he was wondering whether he ought to take this reply in good or ill part. The bonbon was in a gilded paper, but it contained a bean instead of a sweetmeat, and the bean was rather difficult to digest. He looked at the baron, who had an air of perfect and candid innocence. He was reassured. "Honni soit

qui mal y pense !” he said to himself, and recovered his good-humor.

“Where is Mlle. de Saligneux?” he inquired. “The moment has arrived ; I am anxious to present my son to her.”

“There is no need of that,” replied the baron. “The young people met yesterday, and introduced themselves.”

“Eh ! slyboots, you did not tell me !” exclaimed M. Téterol, threatening his son with his finger.

“Monsieur,” resumed the baron, addressing Lionel, “I want to ask some advice of your father, who understands so well how to prune fruit-trees. My daughter is somewhere in the garden ; be so kind as to look there for her. She has been informed of your coming and expects you.”

Lionel did not wait to be told twice. He set out with a heavy, troubled heart. He was annoyed at what he had just heard ; his dignity had been wounded, and a vague uneasiness mingled with his chagrin. It seemed to him that his happiness was a beautiful fruit, in which he had just discovered a worm. “After all,” thought he, “she and I are the only persons concerned ; the rest is quite indifferent to me.”

As he walked past the front of the château, a disagreeable noise made him start. It was the hoarse, sharp creaking of a worn-out chime, which had lost a part of its notes ; the old dotard, who had long since fallen into second childhood, no longer knew its song ; it skipped half of it. At length the clock struck four in tremulous tones, dulled by the hoarseness of age.

The tone was unpleasant ; it seemed to Lionel that the clock was angry with him, and was predicting bad luck to him.

He arrived before the open gate of a vast garden, which had in former days offered to the admiration of visitors beautiful straight alleys, framed by trimmed box and yews cut in spheres and cones ; with trees planted in quincunxes, in squares, or on walls ; thick elm walks, bowers of verdure, statues everywhere ; in the centre, surmounted by flower-beds, a great basin, where the water spouted by dolphins fell back in sheets and jets. It was one of those classic gardens where the constructors flattered themselves that they gave Nature lessons in deportment, on teaching her geometry, and the fine art of irreproachable lines. But Nature detests straight lines ; she is always a recalcitrant scholar to geometricians ; she submits with ill-grace to their tyranny, and resolves to take her revenge. She has a fund of wildness which man cannot conquer ; and the instant that he ceases to impose his will, as soon as he relaxes his care, she destroys her master's work. Nature hates man and always ends by conquering him. The garden which Lionel had just entered had been very badly kept, and had been nearly abandoned since the days of Baron Adhémar, who occupied himself far more with improving his fields than in preserving the useless parts of his domain. After his time decadence had turned to ruin. The box was irregularly cut, the grass invaded the walks, the yews were falling with age ; the great basin had no water, and the dolphins who had formerly spouted it had the

air of inquiring of what use they were in the world ; they had the melancholy physiognomy of all beings who have never known or have forgotten the secret of their destiny. But the statues had suffered more than anything else : moss and green damp had attacked them ; their whiteness had forever disappeared ; a sort of plague or leprosy which seizes on stone had covered them with spots and lumps ; inexorable time had inflicted on them its mutilations and insults. One had lost an arm, another a leg, almost all the tips of their noses. In the basin was a Neptune, whose face was very much damaged, nothing remaining but his beard and half of his trident. A little farther on was a Jupiter deprived of his head ; the rain-water stood in his hollow neck, as if it were a trough, and the sparrows came there to drink, for sparrows respect nothing, and feel no scruples in making a watering-trough of Jupiter's neck. In the middle of a little grove stood a Pan, who had leaned against a rock and played his pipes for nearly two centuries ; he had no longer either pipes or hands, or the slightest breath, and the rock, not knowing the cause of his silence, was surprised not to hear his song. In another place Vertumnus reposed, with crossed legs and his horn of plenty, on a pedestal which had lost its balance ; he had an anxious air, he foresaw an accident. Near by was a pedestal whose statue had disappeared, and which seemed to ask, "What has become of my idol?"

But these devastated, mutilated gardens still had character. One felt that they had served as a stage

or a retreat to noble existences, which they remembered ; one fancied he could divine that, in former days, proud, ambitious, generous hopes, heroic sorrows, had animated those straight alleys, under those well-trimmed hedges, and that they had conversed with the gods, who were then neither lame nor one-armed, nor decrepit nor leprous. The gardens were only the shadow of their former selves ; but in order to pass into that state of shadow, they had first existed ; and many people, if they spoke truthfully, would confess that they go and come, speak and eat, and have the air of being alive, yet do not exist. Such a reflection occurred to Lionel as he cast his eye around him in his endeavor to discover Mlle. de Saligneux. He had set out to find her, and had not succeeded in catching a glimpse of her. He had no inkling that, concealed in an impenetrable bower of verdure, where she had managed to make a peep-hole, she was watching him go and come, was following his every movement, examining him with a curious eye, seeking to read his face and his heart. Absorbed in a profound meditation, revolving a crowd of thoughts which met and battled in her brain, tormented by contradictions, at war with herself, her eyes flashed, sudden blushes covered her cheeks ; she was seized by turns with a nervous trembling, with a desire to cry, to weep, to grow angry. Anger was the sentiment which carried the day. She was irritated against her fate, against her bad luck. It seemed to her that her life was a failure ; that an invisible enemy was working against her ; that an all-powerful genius, full of malig-

nity, had undertaken the government of the world, and that he was putting captious questions to Mlle. de Saligneux ; that he was placing her in embarrassing situations, and saying to her, "Get out of them the best way you can !" At intervals she plucked twigs or leaves ; she tore them in pieces, rubbed them to powder between her fingers. This amusement appeased her anger, but offered no solution.

After having twice made the tour of the garden, Lionel was beating a retreat, when a voice called to him, "Monsieur, are you looking for me ?" He started, turned about, and retraced his steps. The next moment he was seated on a stone bench, the other end of which was occupied by Mlle. de Saligneux. In front of the bench was a sloping lawn, crowned by a broken urn, out of which gazed a grinning Silenus, who doubtless had some reason for his drollery.

Mlle. de Saligneux looked at Lionel, and remarked, "I am told, monsieur, that we are to converse together. Begin : I will reply."

She spoke in a dry and haughty tone. He immediately comprehended that he had deceived himself, or rather that he had been deceived ; that his dream was over ; that, as far as his happiness and pride were concerned, it would have been better for him not to have come to Saligneux. A profound discouragement, a sombre sadness, took possession of him. A short distance away they were thrashing wheat in a barn ; pigeons were cooing on a neighboring roof ; the murmur of a half dried-up rill of water was audi-

ble, as it escaped drop by drop into a subterranean channel. Lionel listened to all these noises ; he gazed at the grinning Silenus, and remained dumb.

From time to time he bent his head slightly toward the left, and then he caught a glimpse of Mlle. de Saligneux, or at least of the skirt of her gray dress, ornamented with pretty pink bows. It seemed to him that the gray skirt and pink ribbons were far away, at the end of the garden—almost at the end of the world. The bench on which he sat was hardly six feet long, and Lionel needed but to stretch out his arm to seize Mlle. de Saligneux's hand and raise it to his lips. But between that baron's daughter and himself lay leagues and leagues—an immeasurable, infinite space. He bitterly regretted that he had not perceived it sooner, and reproached himself for his precipitation, his folly, his awkward credulity. Why had he come to Saligneux? he no longer knew. An invincible timidity, a fear of wasting his words, clogged his tongue. The thrashing of wheat went on in the barn, the pigeons did not grow weary of cooing, the water continued to murmur, the Silenus grinned, and Lionel remained silent.

Mlle. de Saligneux made a gesture of impatience. "Do you know, monsieur," she exclaimed, "that the conversation is making no progress? We must help each other a little, for no one else will help us. Do you wish me to begin? That is not right. Do you find it so difficult to tell me that you think me pretty and charming, and that you adore me? But you are an intelligent man ; you have a horror of trifling speeches,

of stupid lies. Moreover, you know very well that I should not believe you."

Lionel recovered the use of his voice, and replied : "If I were to tell you, mademoiselle, that since the day when I had the happiness, or the unhappiness, to meet you for the first time, I have not succeeded in forgetting you, and that for two months I returned every morning to the spot where I saw you, in the hope of seeing you again, would you believe me?"

"Oh! oh! very well imagined!" said she, gazing at him with an air of incredulous and disdainful surprise.

It was not that this adventure appeared absolutely improbable to her, not that she considered it impossible that Mlle. de Saligneux should have committed irreparable ravages in a heart at first sight; not that she was displeased at having a handsome, blonde young man fall suddenly in love with her; but under the circumstances she could not admit that the handsome blonde was speaking the truth.

"For two months!" she resumed; "that's to say, for sixty days in succession, without excepting the rainy days! That was a fine proceeding. And when you went home without having seen me, did you seriously meditate blowing your brains out?"

"No," replied he, smiling; "I must confess that I never thought of that. My poor brain was too necessary to me at that time. I was busy preparing a thesis, and I was angry with the unknown lady of the Bois de Boulogne for the distraction which she caused me. I ridiculed myself; I said to myself, 'Dieu!

am not I unreasonable, absurd, ridiculous?' and I resolved to forget you ; but the next day I returned to the woods."

"And your thesis was pronounced detestable?"

"Alas ! I must confess that I was complimented on it."

"What a humiliation for me ! But, monsieur, how did you find out that the unknown lady who caused you such dangerous distraction was Mlle. de Saligneux ?"

"I have only known it since yesterday."

"So, monsieur, you were in love with the unknown, and yet you wished to marry Mlle. de Saligneux ?"

"Thank God, Mlle. de Saligneux and the unknown are the same person ; and I swear to you, mademoiselle, that were it otherwise I should not be here."

She looked at him again, and said, "I might have believed you yesterday ; to-day I do not believe you."

"Why ?"

"Because yesterday I knew nothing, and to-day I know all."

"And what do you know ?"

"All, I tell you."

"I conjure you to explain yourself."

"What is the use ?" she replied dryly ; "and what could I tell you ?"

After a pause, Lionel exclaimed, "But what kind of a man do you take me to be ?"

She retorted : "Monsieur, there are docile, obedient, submissive sons, who say *amen* to whatever their fathers propose ; there are well-brought-up young peo-

ple, who have learned from their very infancy to sacrifice their hearts to their vanity ; there are also ambitious men, who find it to their advantage to marry a portionless girl whom they do not love. You have discovered that a Saligneux can be of some service to you. It is highly flattering to me, and I thank you for the honor you do me."

Lionel drew himself up. "So that is the opinion you entertain concerning me," he cried, "and you have not dismissed me !"

"I dismiss you ! I should not think of such a thing."

"What ! mademoiselle, you resign yourself to wed this submissive and idiotic son, this vain fop, this ambitious, unscrupulous man ?"

"Why do you speak of resignation ? Oh ! I am not a girl to sacrifice myself ; sacrifice is a very fine thing, but does not suit me. We are about to conclude a bargain, and the bargain will make two people happy. Do you wish me to show you the bottom of my heart ? I will confess, with downcast eyes, that my girlish dream always was to marry a million. As one ought to be reasonable and not demand too much of Providence, the million of my dreams was sixty years old or thereabouts ; he was ugly, eccentric, had no hair ; and yet, as he was, he suited me. Heaven overwhelms me : the million whom it sends me has all his hair. I do not know exactly, monsieur, of what use I shall be to you—that is your affair ; but I know very well of what use you will be to me, and since you are pleased to ask for my hand, I give it."

"Ah ! mademoiselle, be pleased to dismiss me !" repeated Lionel.

"No ; you will not get me to say it," replied Mlle. de Saligneux ; and she added : "Does my frankness offend you ?"

"Your frankness ! Confess that you are playing a comedy, and that the comedy appears to you, as it does to me, unworthy of you."

She looked at him with such an air of innocent surprise, that he no longer knew what to think of her.

"You think I am acting a comedy ?" she resumed.

"I am frank, monsieur, very frank. My frankness will stand any trial : it is my greatest quality. I do not make illusions for myself about other people, and I do not wish them to have any about me. I will say in my turn : For what do you take me ? For a romantic girl ? Oh ! undeceive yourself. I have a very positive, very practical mind. It may be the result of the education that has been given me. I had not to wait until I put on long dresses to learn that the saddest of all fates is that of a well-born girl whose fortune does not correspond to her pretensions ; and you know that a well-born girl has a great many. I was taught to consider poverty as the worst of evils, as a cause for ridicule, as a deformity. Yes, it is one of the maladies which render life not only painful, but hideous, and I fear it as much as I should the small-pox. Moreover, I will confess that when my father informed me of your proposal, I would not listen to it. 'It is a misalliance,' I said to him. 'Bah,' he replied ; 'it is such a rich match.' 'Cannot I find as rich a one in our

own class?' (That seemed to me very doubtful.) 'But at least you can assure me that this young man will please me?' 'It is enough if he does not displease you.' Well, monsieur, my father was right; you do not displease me; I think you an honest man, and I heartily agree to this misalliance."

"Dieu! *how* very good you are!" cried Lionel. "My happiness is extreme; shall I kneel at your feet to thank you?"

"It is unnecessary; I will excuse you that formality."

"I think there has been enough of this," said he, rising, "and that we have nothing more to say to each other."

"Truly. But I have still a confession to make, a confession which weighs me down, and I desire to rid myself of it immediately. I think you are jealous, monsieur. Yesterday, when I had the pleasure of meeting you on the flowery banks of the Limourde, your first care was to assure yourself that my heart was free, and you were in the greatest haste to inquire—"

"Who Théodore was," he interposed. "I don't care to know now."

"Excuse me, my frankness forces me to tell you."

"Who is Théodore? I know as well as you do," he returned. "Théodore is a delightful and exquisite young man; a young man who is not vain or imbecile, like myself; a young man who not only does not displease you, mademoiselle, but who pleases you extremely, and whom you could marry without incurring

the disgrace of a misalliance. Why does he not possess the million which in your short frocks you already sighed for? Ah! poor Théodore! you sacrifice him to me without remorse, and without regret."

"Without remorse, perhaps; without regret—that is a different thing. Bah! it was only a little school-girl love, and I beg you to believe that I never promised to marry him."

"But you encouraged his hopes?"

"What, monsieur, we are quarreling already! What will come later?"

"What do you expect? You were right: I am of a jealous disposition, and I confess that Théodore—but how will you manage to announce his misfortune to him?"

"*Mon Dieu!*" said she, with forced gayety; "I shall simply explain to him that nowadays there is but one god, the god Dollar, and that M. Lionel Têterol is his prophet."

He approached her, and gazing steadily at her, exclaimed: "And this is the unknown of the Bois de Boulogne! This is what was contained under that plumed hat which I have so often seen in my dreams! this is the heart which beat under the riding habit, which I one day touched with trembling hand! O sweetness of the early spring! O mystery of the Avenue des Poteaux! O my romance! O my folly! I cannot tell you, mademoiselle, under what obligation I am to you. A few minutes ago I felt profoundly unhappy; my heart was sad and heavy. I thank you. Thanks to your noble frankness, I am saved. Behold

me quite cured ; I shall leave this place with a free, light heart."

He bowed to her, and was already walking away, when she said, "Where are you going, monsieur?"

"The obedient, submissive son," he replied, "is going to announce to his father, at once, that he has seen Mlle. de Saligneux for the last time."

She had gained her object ; she had carried out her plan of campaign, and, without much difficulty, had won the game. What was passing in her mind or heart ? She rose, stepped in front of Lionel, barred the way, and, suddenly changing countenance, said, in a trembling voice :

"But you are an honest man after all, monsieur ? I do not understand you. Ah, monsieur, an honest man offers himself ; he does not force himself upon a woman."

Surprised by the change that had taken place in her, he recoiled a step. "What do you mean?" demanded he. "When have I tried to force myself upon you?"

She hastily untied the strings of her hat, which seemed to obstruct her wrath ; the hat fell at her feet, and she did not pick it up. With her head thrown up, her hair in disorder, her eyes flaming, she exclaimed, with vehemence :

"I am willing to admit, monsieur, that it is through want of reflection that you have been rendered an accomplice in an unworthy manœuvre. I even consent to believe that you deign to think me pretty ; that I have had the good fortune to please you ; that you have

yielded to an impulse of your heart or your imagination, in lending yourself to a very ingenious combination which you certainly never would have invented. It is nevertheless true that the person whom you represent here, and whom you have some difficulty in representing, is unworthy of you, as the stupid comedy which I have just played is unworthy of me. You dare to maintain that you have not tried to force yourself on me? The malefactor who stops passers-by at the edge of the woods, demanding their purse or their life, is a gallant man also; he respects the liberty of his neighbor; he permits him to choose. Ah! monsieur, you think it a very simple matter that your father should have bought up notes, in order to have the Baron de Saligneux at his mercy! You think it a simple matter that he should say to him, with his papers in his hand, 'You will make over to me either your château or your honor; either your daughter marries my son, or you will pay me instantly the sum of something over two hundred thousand francs which you owe me!' This proceeding has appeared to you a fair one. You said to yourself, 'She pleases me, she shall be mine, without my feeling bound to make myself agreeable to her!' Is that the act of a very generous man? It is highly chivalrous, or I am much mistaken. In truth, I ought to be proud to think that, by giving myself to you, my father's debt will be extinguished. So, am I worth two hundred thousand francs? It had never entered my mind to ask myself what I was worth. Ah! monsieur, are you sure you reckoned well? Has not some error slipped into

your calculation ? People sometimes make mistakes. How much is my smile worth ? and my hair ? I do not speak of my heart : there was no question of it in the bargain ; you knew well that it would never be yours. Monsieur, I ask you once again, what do you take me for ? My aunt, the Countess de Juines, repeats to me every morning and every evening that I am a Saligneux. I do not wish to be untruthful ; I am proud of being a Saligneux, without thinking myself for that reason made of any other clay than the common run of mortals. But if I were a little *bourgeoise*, a working-girl, a simple peasant, I would never consent to allow myself to be treated as merchandise. No, monsieur, there are no girls for sale here ; apply elsewhere or keep your million—your million, which a man whom I do not love insolently flings at my head.”

Lionel had made repeated attempts to interrupt her ; he could not hold his own before the excitement of an irritated woman, whose wrath boiled over noisily, like an overflowing torrent. A low accompaniment mingled with the sounds of her voice : it was the cadenced fall of the flail, as it beat on the wheat in the barn. It seemed to Lionel that it was he who was being beaten ; he felt the blows rain on his shoulders, and he was surprised not to find himself already ground to powder. Mlle. de Saligneux continued with increasing excitement :

“ God knows how dear Saligneux is to me, and the profound attachment I cherish for my memories. The decrepit, headless, armless statues which you see in this garden, are more precious to me than all the

baubles you can offer. In the morning I am awakened by an old clock, whose hoarse voice seems to issue from the depths of a past which I love; my heart responds to it; every time it strikes, I gather blessed hours in the air. Well, monsieur, take this house where I was born, take my memories, take my happiness, take all, but Mlle. de Saligneux will never be yours. And hold; before we part, I will make you a confession, which will be quite sincere. I arose this morning with an evil design in my heart. I had formed the plan of being very prudent, very adroit, of manœuvring so skillfully that, in saying yes, I should force you to say no, and the rupture would be imputed to you. One cannot be adroit at will. I have executed my project so awkwardly that my sincerity appeared suspicious to you. The words would not come to me; I have not been able to repeat one quarter of the discourse I had prepared; my empty brain would not serve me, and you were only half duped. Here I stand, monsieur. Go tell your father that the bargain which he wishes to force on me is revolting to me; that I will never endure the shame of it; and that his millions, of which he is so proud, will never be of any use to him, as far as buying a Saligneux is concerned. Go tell him that this château is his, but that this hand is not for sale, and that you will never hold it in yours."

Lionel was stunned, beside himself, as if struck by lightning. As soon as he could get in a word, he exclaimed, "Mademoiselle, I swear to you that I was absolutely ignorant—"

He could say no more ; confusion, rage, despair, choked his voice. He gazed at Mlle. de Saligneux for a few seconds, as if, being condemned never to see her again, he wished to carry her away in his eyes. Then he turned on his heel and fled. Jupiter, Neptune, Pan, Vertumnus, Silenus, Pomona, and Pallas, all the gods in the garden, watched his flight, and thought the young man was a robber who had been caught in the act.

XIV.

LIONEL was so unhappy on leaving the château, his mind was so bewildered, that he mistook the road and lost his way. He walked straight ahead, on a venture, as if intoxicated with his trouble ; for trouble produces intoxication as well as joy. When he came to himself, he found himself in the midst of a wood, where he wandered for several hours, busy in probing his wounds, which were deep.

He was suffering under two sorrows, which were equally severe : his pride had been wounded as well as his heart. Up to that day he had felt for Mlle. de Saligneux only a fancy, a love of the brain. He had now learned to know his unknown : he had discovered that she had a noble, generous soul on a level with his own, and that she was worthy of his love. He loved her for her scorn of him ; he loved her for the insults she had heaped on him ; he loved her wrath as much as he did her beauty. He fancied he saw her standing

before him, her eye flashing, her lips trembling, and saying to him, "I will never belong to a man whom I do not love." This defiant young lioness had taken possession of his heart, which she held in her claws, and she cried to him, "Come and get it if you dare!" Alas! he would never see her again. Why could he not forget her?

With his chagrin were mingled a remorse, a feeling of shame, the cry of his wounded pride which accused him. Had he, who was so jealous of his dignity, actually made it run such risks and compromise itself so stupidly? He had sinned through ignorance: this was not a valid excuse. He ought to have guessed that his father was concealing something from him. An honest man is always on his guard; his vigilance does not allow him to be put in a false position; he is as careful of his honor as is the ermine of the whiteness of its coat. He suddenly thought of his mother—of her Dutch fondness for cleanliness, which she carried almost to the point of superstition; of the horror she felt at anything resembling a stain. She could not see one on a napkin, a carpet, or the floor, without uttering a cry of sorrowful indignation; and she could not rest until she had erased it. But what she detested above all things was anything which leaves a stain on a man's life. One can send one's linen to the wash, but one cannot wash out one's past life.

It seemed to delicate-minded Lionel that by being concerned in an unclean transaction, even unwittingly, he had soiled his life and his hands; that, however

much he might scrape them, the stain would always reappear. What would he not have given if the sun had not risen that morning, if that day had never had a beginning ! What a transport of joy he would have felt if any one had come to him and said, "You are mistaken ; nothing has taken place. You have had a bad dream ; wake up. You fancy that, a little while ago, you were talking with a baron's daughter, that you offered her your heart, that she declined the fine present, that her brown eyes were inflamed with wrath, and that she did not spare her expressions of scorn. What a delusion ! nothing like that has taken place. The baron's daughter and her brown eyes are a chimera of your imagination, and there never existed a *château* of Saligneux." On arriving at the end of a path, where the foliage was less dense, he perceived the *château*. It was a terribly real witness, which had seen all, heard all, and had the air of remembering it. Then Lionel plunged again into a thicket, and recommenced the recital of his griefs to the grand, deaf forest, in the midst of which he wandered like a soul in torment ; the forest listened, deaf as it was. The brushwood drew aside discreetly to let him pass ; the birches bowed their heads in sign of compassion ; the old oaks said softly, "Yes, he is very unhappy ; but the brown eyes do exist, and for a long time he will not be able to think of them night or day without feeling an adder sting his heart."

M. Têterol would have been greatly astonished if he could have seen his son at that moment, talking to the oaks and birches. After having given M. de Sali-

gneux a lesson on pruning fruit-trees, he had returned to the White House, convinced that the business was settled ; that his intervention was unnecessary ; that that day must be given up to the follies of sentiment, and that serious conversation must be postponed until the morrow.

With a joyful heart and radiant brow he had smiled affably on every one he met. "Ah ! the slyboots," he said to himself ; "he saw her yesterday, and took care not to mention it." It did not displease him to discover that his son was sly ; he thought that men who have an idea in their brains which they do not divulge have a better chance of making their way in the world than other people. "In spite of his liking lilies," he thought, "the boy is like me ; he is of my blood."

Seven o'clock struck, and Lionel had not returned. "He has been kept to dinner," murmured M. Têterol. "I begin to think that this marriage pleases the Saligneux even more than it does me ; they are afraid we shall slip through their fingers. They do not know what I am preparing for them."

He seated himself at the table, and, reduced to a conversation with his plate, he explained to it that for forty years he had had an idea ; that this idea had been confused for a long time, and that it had gradually assumed a definite form. He tossed off a bumper of wine, and exclaimed, "To the health of the mother and of the child !" He could not remember ever having been so gay. His joy produced a nervous creeping sensation ; it tickled his lips ; it wanted

to talk, to sing, to make a noise, and was annoyed at not having any one but a plate to talk to.

Time passed ; Lionel did not return, and M. Tèterol counted the minutes ; he was eager to question his son, to make him tell everything, to learn what had been said, the circumstances and the incidents down to the minutest detail ; he had always been fond of details. A little uneasiness mingled with his impatience. "If only they don't take him in," he thought. "Bah ! he will not bind himself to anything without consulting me. He knows well that he who wills, he who decides all, is here. Poor cat ! that little girl pleases him, and he forgets himself in courting her. No matter ; he ought to remember that I am waiting for him. Shall I send for him ?"

Suddenly the stairs creaked under the step of a man who was ascending hastily, the door opened, and Lionel appeared. He had forced himself to assume his usual expression ; his eyes kept his secret well.

"Ah ! here is the conqueror !" cried M. Tèterol gayly. "Was it not Cæsar who said, *Veni, vidi, vixi* ? Is it *vixi* or *vici*, Lionel ?"

"It is *vici*, father."

"That is all the Latin I ever knew, and I know no more. Oh ! Latin is a lawyer's science ; it serves to express one's self unintelligibly. But do you know, my boy, you staid an eternity there ? Those people would not let you go. The gourmands !"

Lionel approached the table, seated himself opposite his father, drew a bottle of Pomard wine which was untouched toward him, filled a glass two-thirds

full, and emptied it at a draught. His throat was dry ; perhaps he needed to strengthen himself.

"The plague ! how you go at it !" resumed the old man. "It seems their wine is not as good as this ; I suspect them of drinking adulterated piquette. And such people put on airs ! Ah ! I hope," he continued, "that you only talked nonsense, that there was no mention of business. The business part is my affair ; and I will draw up the contract. I mean to have Saligneux included in the dowry ; if not, all is off."

Lionel looked at his father, whom he had not glanced at before, and said :

"You can spare yourself the trouble of meditating at length on the clauses of the contract ; it will be time wasted."

"Time wasted ! Why ?"

Lionel replied quietly, "Because I will never marry Mlle. de Saligneux."

M. Tèterol experienced the disagreeable sensation of a huntsman who has taken aim at a hare, and whose gun bursts in his hands. He did not believe his ears, and he thrust his fingers into them to remove impediments. Then he glanced at the ceiling, to make sure that it was solid and was not about to fall on his head. At last he looked at his son to assure himself that his son was not a maniac.

"Be so kind as to repeat what you just said," said he.

"I repeat that I will never marry Mlle. de Saligneux," replied Lionel, slightly elevating his voice.

"And the reason, monsieur ?"

"The reason is, that she does not please me."

M. Têterol felt relieved ; this extravagant reply did not seem to him to be serious.

"You droll fellow !" said he, laughing ; "she does not please you ! But she pleased you yesterday !"

"People sometimes change their opinions ; I have changed mine."

"Ah ! monsieur has changed his mind ! And might one inquire why he has changed it ? Perhaps he has discovered that Mlle. de Saligneux's hair is not her own, that she wears false braids. Well ! my boy, you will have to marry a woman who displeases you. She pleases me extremely, even if she wears a wig : that is enough, I think."

Lionel folded his arms and replied, "Possibly, but this marriage will not take place."

"Upon my word of honor, he has said it three times !" cried M. Têterol, bringing his fist down on the table with formidable violence, making the glasses and bottles clatter. It was not only the table which was affected ; everything in the room trembled—the walls, the chairs, the sideboard and the plate upon it, the last flies of the season hidden in a fold of the curtain—everything, down to the bulldog who was crouching before the chimney, and who, waking with a start, hearing the thunder, growling, and fearing that he would be drawn into the affair under some pretense or other, sprang with one bound through the door, which he had learned to open for himself, and rushed out-doors as though he had the devil at his heels.

"Shut the door, which that fool has left open," shouted M. Têterol imperiously to his son.

Lionel rose, shut the door, and returned to his seat opposite his father.

"Eh! you won't marry?" resumed M. Têterol. "Who are you, to say you will or will not? Do you suppose that I took the trouble of bringing a son into the world, not to have him of my opinion? Eh! what do I care for your likes or dislikes; your fancies, your assertions, reassertions, and recantations? But monsieur actually thinks he is somebody. He is persuaded that he has talent, a great future; his petty imagination has built on that, and he is bursting with pride. For you *are* bursting with pride; it stands out in your eyes; you think you are somebody. A thousand thunders! what would you be without me? I made myself; I am not sure that I had a father. I have always been alone, all alone; I have struggled and drudged; I have tormented my body and my soul, and no one helped me. I have been cold and hungry, and on the day when I could spend ten sous on my dinner I thought myself king of creation. You were born in luxury, and it is lucky you were not called upon to earn your own living. Look at your hands; they are the hands of a lady. Who supported you? I. Who brought you up? I. Who sent you on your travels? I. You have cost me a great deal; do you wish me to show you my account-books? If you were to become a councilor of state, a deputy, or a minister, to-morrow, whose would be the merit? whose the glory? Mine; I paid.

Well, the one who pays has the right to command, and it is the duty of the one who receives to obey ; and you shall obey—I swear it by all the pear-trees of all the barons of Saligneux !”

Lionel maintained a gloomy silence. M. Téterol, thrusting his head forward, looked down on him. “I saw clearly, the other evening,” he pursued, “you have left a mistress behind you, for whose sake you have committed follies ; and what displeases you is that Mlle. de Saligneux is not as pretty as that hussy. Is she so very charming ? In what gutter did you pick her up ? That is where my money goes : it goes to buy a woman laces, and truffles, and champagne. If that woman were a very angel, you can put on mourning for her. By God ! I will crush you both like glass, your mistress and you.”

Lionel did not open his lips. He was saying to himself that Mlle. de Saligneux was far more terrible than his father ; that in her presence he had been troubled, had lost his head, while at this moment he was in full possession of his faculties. If he was silent, it was because he was biding his time.

His father mistook the cause of his silence ; he thought his resistance was yielding, that his courage was beginning to give way. He rose, approached the young man, and saw tears running slowly down his cheeks.

These tears made him pause, and striking his forehead—“How stupid I am !” he said, in a softened tone. “I see how it is ; I guess what has taken place. These Saligneux are insolent, and this young one takes

after her family, although she is so nice. She has humiliated you by her haughtiness; she has made you feel that you were only a *bourgeois*, a Têterol; that she would be doing you a great honor if she married you. Have I guessed right? Is not that it?"

"Perhaps," answered Lionel, raising his head.

"I was sure of it; that little girl put on great airs which wounded you to the quick. You are proud, and I do not think it a crime in you; I also am proud. When I received that famous kick, ah! do you know that for three hours I thought of setting fire to the château? But I changed my mind; I preferred to earn millions. There are two kinds of pride, my boy—the kind which sulks and the kind which takes its revenge. You shall have yours. Ah! mademoiselle puts on airs! Apparently they have forgotten to inform her of certain details. She will be as gentle as a lamb to-morrow. Be tranquil; we have her in our power."

"We have her in our power?" asked Lionel.

"The two papers, the two deeds—her father has not told her of the two papers."

"What are these two papers?"

"I was wrong not to show them to you; I was mysterious. I ought to have informed you that I had bought up certain notes, so that at this moment the baron owes me a little over two hundred thousand francs; and he has agreed to pay them on demand in case his daughter refuses you. What would you have? One must have some hold on such people: they are as false as a bad shilling."

"And he signed that agreement?"

"In full."

"I can scarcely believe it," observed Lionel.

"Oh! you only believe what you see," retorted his father, with a loud laugh. "Decidedly, you are like me; I have always insisted on seeing and touching. Wait a bit, you shall see and you shall touch."

He went out, took the two documents from a drawer in his desk, and brought them back in triumph. After waving them for a moment in the air, he placed them on the table, saying to his son, "Don't breathe on them; they will fly away. They are precious."

Lionel read the two documents attentively; his eyes burned with fever, his temples throbbed, and his nails scratched the table.

"Really," he exclaimed, "this counter-deed is a fine invention, and I can now understand what Mlle. de Saligneux said to me a while ago. She compared me to a highway robber, who, with pistol in hand—Ah! yes, this paper is equivalent to a pistol. Thus, while declaring herself ready to marry me, she thought fit to represent to me beforehand that I had a base soul and an indelicate manner of proceeding. These gentry drink adulterated piquette, which disturbs their brains. Mlle. de Saligneux thinks that this marriage would disgrace her; and I think that if she did not feel it to be a disgrace, she would be unworthy of being loved by me."

His astounded father exclaimed, "Are you talking

Chinese? I must inform you that I do not understand that language."

"This is clear, at all events," replied Lionel. And, tearing the counter-deed in eight pieces, he threw them on the hearth, where a large fire was burning.

Saint Augustine said, "I believe, because it is above reason." M. Téterol, who did not resemble St. Augustine in the least, had no taste for things above reason, and he had a good deal of difficulty in believing. When he became the witness of an event which overturned all his calculations, his first impulse was to refuse to believe the testimony of his senses, to treat them as impostors: his logic was dearer to him than his ears or his eyes. The scene which had just taken place seemed to him to belong to the domain of the incredible and impossible. That his son should break out into open revolt against him, that his son should lay violent hands on his property, that his son should dare to destroy a paper belonging to his father, a paper which was equivalent to the title-deed to Saligneux—that surpassed his powers of imagination; it could not be, it was not! Stupefied, motionless as if petrified, he gazed at a chimney where something was burning, wondering what that chimney was doing there, and what that object was which was burning. At last, recovering his animation and the use of his brain, of his arms and his limbs, he uttered a roar like a bull, flung himself on his son as he had flung himself on the beggar who was stealing his mushrooms two days previously, and seized him by the throat to strangle him.

Lionel did not attempt to defend himself. "Do with me what you will," he exclaimed, and shut his eyes; for his father's face, his eyes dilated with fury and hate, his distorted features and foaming mouth, frightened him. His breath failed him, he felt as though he were dying, and half lost consciousness. Suddenly the ten fingers which were bruising and strangling him relaxed, relinquished their hold, and he fell heavily on a chair.

When he opened his eyes, he again perceived the face which terrified him. A heavy, brutal hand thrust his hat on his head, and a hoarse voice shouted :

"Away from here forever ! Don't you see that I shall kill you ?"

Lionel rose and made the tour of the room twice, hunting for the door without finding it. At last he found it, and went out, descended the stairs, crossed the courtyard, and had the gate opened by the astonished porter, who asked him some questions to which he made no reply.

He betook himself to the inn, where he succeeded in procuring a carriage, not without undergoing a second questioning, to which his pallor and silence were the only answer.

He arrived about midnight at Pont d'Ain, where he waited six hours for the train, which was to take him back to Paris. He entered an inn, and ate a plate of soup, of which he stood in great need, having had no dinner. Then he asked for pen and paper, and wrote the following letter :

"**MADemoiselle :** I will not repeat that when I

presented myself before you to-day I was utterly ignorant of the nature of the agreement and treaty concluded between my father and M. de Saligneux. I do not give my word twice : so much the worse for those who do not believe me. It is a pity that you cannot distinguish a lying visage from an honest one, and a proud soul from a heart given up to the worship of petty vanities ; but your excuse is at hand—you are not yet twenty.

“I have declared to my father that I will not consent to the marriage, the idea of which he cherished unknown to me. To make matters surer, I have torn in pieces and thrown into the fire the counter-deed which M. de Saligneux was so lamentably weak as to sign. He has four years before him, in which to devise some means of acquitting himself of his debt without selling the house where you were born and which is dear to you.

“Pray pardon my involuntary crime and the annoyance I have caused you. If a bat were to enter your room some night, when you had neglected to close the window, you would pity it as you drove it out, nor would you find forgiveness difficult. I am the bat ; you will never see me more, and you will find it easy to forget me. I wish you, mademoiselle, with all respect, every happiness which you can desire.”

When he had written and sealed the letter he felt more tranquil. It seemed as though everything had returned to its usual order ; that all the world had gone back to its proper place ; that he had taken his

revenge, effaced the stain, and that his self-respect had returned to him. But does one's own self-respect suffice, when one is so unhappy as to love Mlle de Saligneux ?

XV.

GOETHE, the only poet who was a great sage, the only sage who was a great poet, said, "Fool, if your house is burning, put it out ; if it is burnt, rebuild it."

"Narre, wenn es brennt, so lösche ;
Hat's gebrannt, bau wieder auf."

These two lines suited Lionel Têterol's situation admirably. He had a wretched fever, a burning memory to extinguish in his heart, and he had also a house to rebuild. This was the subject of his thoughts in the train, during the whole journey from Pont d'Ain to Paris.

This son of a millionaire found himself deprived of his income, of the allowance which had been given him by a father who was at once avaricious and prodigal. He had never been addicted to pleasures ; but had always lived expensively, knowing nothing of privation, denying himself nothing, without care for the morrow ; and he had acquired a taste for a facile, comfortable existence, the love of his ease, and for the elegances of life. Henceforth he was reduced to his own resources ; he must depend on himself alone. To tell the truth, it was not that which troubled him,

and he had no cause for tormenting himself about his future. He had numerous friends in Paris, among whom were persons in high positions—a minister even, formerly a professor of law, who had recently become keeper of the seals, and who had often shown a great deal of kind feeling for the promising young man. An appeal to his kindness would not be made in vain. He had but to ask; he was sure of being listened to. The son of Jean Têterol had also his idea. He was as sure of his ability as of his ambition: this conscript felt the baton of a marshal of France dancing about in his knapsack. But his father had said: "You have only had the trouble of coming into the world; what would you be without me? I have toiled, you have never worked." Lionel wished to take the measure of his character, of his endurance, of his courage; he resolved to prove to himself that he could toil without complaining, and that he could get on without patronage or protectors. He said to himself, "I will make my way alone." Perhaps, also, he reflected that voluntary sufferings are the best remedy for sufferings of another kind, and an excellent means of forgetting Mlle. de Saligneux.

For three years he had been living in a pretty *entresol* on the Quai Voltaire; he had furnished it, arranged it, decorated it, according to his own taste. From his window he could see the chestnut-trees in the garden of the Tuileries, the Seine, the bridges, the people and boats passing to and fro, a vast extent of sky, the setting and the rising of the sun. He took a delight, every morning, in gazing at the vapors, of an

opal or pearl-gray color, in the midst of which Paris awakes, out of which emerge, one after the other, its palaces, steeples, monuments, and roofs, surprised and charmed to find themselves all in their proper places. Lionel's lease expired at the close of the year. His first act was to inform the *concierge* that he thought of moving. Heaven, favoring his virtuous resolution, brought him the very next day an under-tenant, who was accepted. He immediately busied himself with selling his furniture, his carpets, his plate, and even his knick-knacks, which he tenderly loved, and which he once thought necessary to his happiness. He possessed some paintings and bronzes, a valuable Rousseau, a Corot, a Millet, a lion and a tiger by Barye; he had no pity on himself; he kept neither the lion nor the tiger, although his heart bled.

A few days later he was installed in the fourth floor of a little furnished hotel, in the Rue Racine. He had fits of black melancholy while superintending his moving. A narrow, blind staircase, with sticky balusters; a square cell, which smelled musty; scanty, crippled furniture; drawers whose handles came off in his hand; a window looking on a courtyard which the sun never visited; muslin curtains, yellow with age, insulted and spotted by the flies: what a contrast to his pleasant *entresol*! The walls were impregnated with that greasy dust which is the scourge of furnished lodgings; each lodger brings a little, and their united dust resists all the efforts of the duster. They have a mute history; it is as well that they do not tell it.

Lionel placed himself at the window ; he had to twist his neck in order to catch a glimpse of the sky, but he resigned himself to his lot. The next moment, having placed his hands on the round table, which was the greatest ornament of his new apartment, he retained a mark on the tips of all ten fingers, and made a face over it. Then he said : " I am too effeminate. *Peste, non dolet !* "

During his sojourn in England and Germany, Lionel had entered into relations with one of the leading journals of Paris ; the letters which he sent from London and Berlin were noticed, and attracted proposals which were not accepted ; he had not thought at that time of making his way by journalism. The day after he took possession of his paltry apartment, he wrote an article on the political situation of the moment, which was a masterpiece of good sense, spirited irony, and lively eloquence. This article, which was published at once, provoked retorts, to which he replied. This *début* created a sensation, and the *débutant* was invited to enroll himself on the permanent staff of the journal. He had become so jealous of his liberty that he refused. His pen meant to serve the republic as a volunteer. He consented to write, but only at his own pleasure, when his heart prompted him, and his sonorous prose was eagerly received. He employed the rest of his time in preparing an article on Justices of the Peace in England for a learned review. The first money he received caused him one of the purest joys he had ever experienced in his life, a real poor man's joy : it was money which he had

earned, money which was really his. He gazed at it tenderly, locked it up in a drawer, and resolved to be very saving of it. He was afraid of robbers, and feared to become avaricious.

Yet it was less from avarice than on account of a settled plan of conduct that he severely erased from his budget every unnecessary expense, and reduced himself in everything to the lowest possible point. He dined at a cook-shop in the Boulevard Saint-Michel. The beef was very tough; he digested it; but the cloth was of a doubtful cleanliness, and he found it somewhat difficult to accustom himself to it. He followed the example of Diogenes when he broke his porringer: he changed his cook-shop for a soup-shop where there was no cloth at all. In the beginning of December it was intensely cold. Lionel spent whole days at work without any fire in his room, the window of which fitted so badly that the curtain was always fluttering. When his fingers grew stiff, he breathed on them; when they begged for pity, their master laughed at them; when they refused to serve him, he gave himself up for five minutes to exercising with the dumb-bells, and then took up his pen again, saying to himself, "That's all the hardship there is in it!" He allowed himself every evening a pleasure, and feasted on a little blaze: this was dangerous to him. As soon as his hearth was lighted up, he felt his imagination awake; deadened memories moved in his head, like torpid vipers revived by heat, who unfold their rings, and seek to sting the kindly hand which nourishes them. At the back of the hearth he saw

appear brown eyes, and hair which was almost black ; long conversations took place between him and the vision.

"Who are you ?"

"You pretend not to know, but you do know."

"Whence come you ?"

"From the depths of your memory, or your heart. You thought I was no longer there, but I am there still."

"What have you come here for ?"

"To convince you of the powerlessness of your will, of which you are so proud. You wish to forget, and you remember !"

"What matters it ? I no longer love you. You never inspired me with anything more than a fancy ; I loved you with my eyes, that is all."

"One day you saw me in a rage, and your fancy became a passion."

"I swear that you are absolutely indifferent to me."

"Dare you say it, and look me in the face ?"

At these words the brown eyes dilated and seemed to bid him defiance, and a little mouth with mocking lips uttered a sonorous peal of laughter. Lionel immediately seized the tongs and poked the ashes briskly, as if to bury the vision ; but it reappeared at the end of a few moments, and he had to recommence conversation with it.

One day, when Lionel had dined later than usual, and was coming out of his soup-shop, about nine o'clock, he met, face to face on the sidewalk of the

Boulevard Saint-Michel, M. Pointal, who had come to the quarter on business. The notary raised his hands to heaven on recognizing him, and drawing him under a street lamp :

"It is really you," said he. "And what the devil have you been doing in that cabaret?"

"Speak better of it," replied Lionel ; "it is a very respectable place."

"Perhaps, but you always had the fault of being rather particular about your food. Have you undertaken a statistical and philanthropical inquiry into the state of popular restaurants?"

"You give me credit for being more particular than I am, M. Pointal. If I go to the restaurant, it is merely to dine."

"You dine there!" exclaimed M. Pointal tragically. "Tell that tale to some one else! Unless you have turned Quaker— But I am wrong; Quakers love good eating: it is the only pleasure which is not forbidden them, and it is said that the cooking is better in Pennsylvania than in any other country in the world. And Quakers have the reputation, too, of loving their friends, and you forget yours; you let weeks and weeks pass by without sending them any tidings. I know nothing. When does the marriage take place?"

"What marriage?" asked Lionel in an unsteady voice, nonplused by this question.

"So you are not to marry Mlle. de Saligneux?"

"That plan was an unpleasant jest."

"A jest!" exclaimed M. Pointal. "And the two

letters which you wrote to me ! There is some mystery here," he added ; "and now I have got hold of you, I mean to have the key to the enigma. Take me home to your rooms ; we can talk better there."

And passing his arm through the young man's arm, who turned toward the Rue Racine with him, he continued :

"Whether you marry or not makes no difference to me ; but last evening I was at the Ministry of Justice, and you were mentioned. You have just published an article on the Justices of the Peace in England. I have not read it—I have no time to read anything ; but the minister, who, it seems, has more leisure than I have, has read it, and he said yesterday that it was the work of a master. You know that he is not lavish of his praises. In connection with it he inquired after you. 'What has become of him? Nobody sees him nowadays.' After which, as you can easily imagine, he spoke of something else. Take care, my dear fellow. You know Paris. The hardest, most disastrous sentence which can be pronounced upon a man here is the remark, 'Nobody sees him.' 'Tis the preface to a burial. In spite of your being a young man of great promise, no one sees you any more : if you remain invisible for a short time longer, you will soon cease to exist, and I think you care about existence."

"Reassure yourself," replied Lionel quietly ; "I shall rise again."

And, as they arrived at his door, he pulled the bell.

"Where are you taking me?" demanded the notary, scrutinizing the house, which seemed unworthy of the Prince of Wales.

"Home, parbleu!" replied Lionel, pushing him into the entrance.

Then, taking his candle in the porter's lodge, he showed him the way, by preceding him up the blind and greasy staircase which led to his room. When M. Pointal had entered, he cast about him glances which grew more and more astonished.

"My palace has not the good fortune to please you?" said the young man.

"Really, for a dog-hole, it is not so bad; but, to speak frankly, the one which you lived in on the Quai Voltaire seemed to me more comfortable. Ah! it is freezing here. You used to have a man; call him to make the fire."

"Here he is, at your service," responded Lionel; "and believe me, he is as good as the other, who never was on hand when he was wanted."

Thus speaking, he lighted his fire, which was not long in blazing up. Then he drew up a rather ragged arm-chair for the notary, and seated himself opposite him on a chair equally shabby.

"Is this an experiment you are working out?" said M. Pointal.

"Perhaps so; and it has been successful up to this time. I propose to write a long treatise on habit. What a strange thing is habit, M. Pointal! It is the only slavery to which one becomes reconciled. I must confess, to speak frankly, that it was very difficult

for me to become accustomed to my palace. And the thing the most disagreeable to me was the green stain which you perceive on the ceiling. One would say it was a polypus, extending in every direction its long arms covered with suckers. At first that spot was horrible to me ; I could not endure it, and carefully avoided looking at it. Well ! I have gradually become reconciled to its ugliness, and I find in it a charm which inspires me. When I am working and find myself at a loss for a word, I look at it and the word comes to me. In short, I love that stain now ; I could not do without it ; it is company for me—it is necessary to my happiness.”

M. Pointal, who had listened to him with his eyes fixed on the fire, suddenly raised his chin and exclaimed, “I will wager that we have fallen out with our father, and that he has cut off our supplies !”

“Cut off the supplies !” replied Lionel, smiling ; “he almost cut my throat.”

The smile faded from his lips. He seemed again to behold his father, furious, beside himself, half crazy, holding him by the throat and choking him. He could not recall the scene without a shudder.

M. Pointal was given to questions. Lionel refused to satisfy his curiosity at first ; but, being pressed, he decided to tell him his story, after a little preparation. He began in a light tone, which he could not keep up until the end. His gayety abandoned him ; he became serious, and at times his tongue was embarrassed ; he became entangled in sentences, which he finished with difficulty. Although

he was in the habit of speaking clearly, and of retaining full possession of his ideas, he could no longer command them ; even, although he looked hard at the greenish stain, words would not come to him. The notary observed that every time he had occasion to pronounce Mlle. de Saligneux's name, he hesitated, dropped his head, and paused, as though he were measuring with his eye a ditch before he jumped it. M. Pointal was not only an interrogating man, but an astute and penetrating one, who hit the mark in his conjectures.

"My faith !" said he, when Lionel had finished his recital, "that was not a bad idea of your love of a father ; but he erred in its execution. When skillful people become awkward, they are more awkward than others, and the scorn of mankind is a poor counselor. Truly, it is a great pity, for Mlle. de Saligneux is a charming person."

"Do you know her ?" demanded Lionel, changing color.

"I have had the honor of receiving her twice in my office, whither she came in company with her great-uncle, the Marquis de Virevielle, who has been my client for many years. Do you know what she looks like ? With her dark complexion, dark, disheveled hair, the singular vivacity of her glance, and a certain deliberation in her speech and walk, she resembles one of those ravishing gypsies whose eyes cast spells. Ah ! I hope she has not cast one over you."

"Comfort yourself ; she has cast nothing over me."

"Truly now, do you not think her pretty?"

"She may possibly be so, but I am not quite sure of it."

"What are you sure of, then? On your conscience, now, are you not in love with her?"

"I have neither the time nor the disposition for love; I leave her entirely to her Théodore."

"Who is Théodore?"

"I do not know in the least, and I do not care to know. But, if you please, we will talk about the Justices of the Peace in England."

"Oh, no!" said M. Pointal, looking at his watch. "I must run away, but I do not forbid you to accompany me to my house; that is, if your plan of reform allows you to accompany your friends home."

Lionel took his hat and cane to accompany M. Pointal to the Rue Royale, where he lived. M. Pointal was fond of walking, and the night was fine, though rather chilly. On the way they talked of various things; but, as they were crossing the Place de la Concorde, the notary pressed Lionel's arm, and said abruptly:

"So, my boy, you can swear to me that you are not in love with Mlle. de Saligneux?"

"How many times must I repeat it to you?" retorted Lionel in an angry tone, contracting his brows.

"Eh! don't get angry. You see, there are certain things which set me thinking. I have not had time to read your learned treatise on Justices of the Peace, so I admire it on trust, on the faith of a min-

ister ; but I have read certain articles which you have recently published in a journal, and which created a sensation. These articles caused me, at the same time, a great deal of pleasure and a little chagrin. I will not quarrel with you on the grounds of your opinions. You are liberal, more so than I am ; it is very natural, and I have nothing to say against it. But the style appeared to me rather sharp and even rather harsh, almost bitter ; and it seemed to me that this style was not like you. Your talent is not harsh, and your wit is not malicious. ‘With whom is he angry?’ I said to myself. ‘One could almost believe that he has a leaven of malice in his heart, which he wishes to wreak on some person or thing.’ It often happens that the best fellows in the world, endowed with excellent intelligence, fall out with society because of their grievances with Tom, Dick, or Harry ; they are not contented, they conclude that everything is going wrong, and they call the government to account for their heartaches. *Mon Dieu* ! I do not apply this to you, but can you affirm that you were not thinking of *Mlle. de Saligneux* when you railed at the ballot by *arrondissements* ?”

“Ah ! how like you, *M. Pointal* !” exclaimed Lionel. “What penetration ! what sagacity ! You are the greatest man in the world for building systems in the air, for poisoning a theory as vast as the universe on the point of a needle.”

“It seems that my needles prick, for you positively look as if you were touched. But that is not all ; there

is something more. One day you announce to me in the most frightened, the most pathetic tone, that your father is holding a knife to your throat, that he has conceived the absurd project of marrying you to a baron's daughter, that the match inspires you with an invincible repugnance, and you beg me to get you out of the scrape. The affair was urgent, and I was already packing my bag to fly to your rescue, when I receive a countermand, worded thus: 'My dear sir, consider my letter as null and void. I have seen Mlle. de Saligneux!' Is that clear?"

"Eh! yes; I did see her, and she pleased me," replied Lionel. "But I saw her again, and she greatly displeased me." And growing warm in spite of himself, he continued: "That baron's daughter affects fine sentiments. I am not the dupe of her noble pride, of the exquisite delicacy of her heart. Would you like to know her secret? She is full of arrogance and prejudices; whatever she may say, she does believe she is made of different clay from the common run of people. My father is right, a thousand times right, in hating these gentry. The villainous race, the foolish creatures, with their ridiculous pretensions and antediluvian ideas! Mlle. de Saligneux was shocked, insulted, rebellious, because a petty *bourgeois*, a nobody, a Têterol, dared to aspire to her hand. To sum it up in two words, Mlle. de Saligneux has a small mind and a small heart."

"And that is why the ballot by arrondissements—Ah! my poor boy, your case is a grave one."

Lionel bit his lips. "M. Pointal," he returned cold-

ly, "I swear to you that I care no more for Mlle. Saligneux than for this obelisk, to which I have the honor of introducing you."

"You are very good ; we have known each other for a long time," replied the exasperating notary. "But I am reassured, and I am very glad of it ; for dining for thirty sous in a cook-shop, living in a dog-hole in the Rue Racine, having a green spot on one's ceiling ! these are misfortunes which can be borne, while loving a cruel woman— But you are leaving me ? you are not coming as far as my door ?"

"We can see it from here."

"You are in a hurry to return to your Eden. Will you do me a favor before you go ?"

"What is it ?"

"Borrow fifty thousand francs of me."

"Never !"

"I am good-natured, I will make a concession : borrow five hundred louis."

"Do you mean to insult me ?"

"I should be so happy to be your creditor."

"Never, I tell you."

"You resemble your father more than one would believe, when you take anything in your head. Remember, at least, that you formerly had an excellent habit of dining with me every Monday. I shall expect you next Monday. And, moreover, I beg you to change your note somewhat, in your articles, from this day forth. I know very well that there are writers who need to be in a rage in order to bring out their talent. That is not the case with you ; you were born a phi-

losopher, and philosophers do not lose their tempers, even when in love with a baron's daughter."

Lionel abruptly seized both his hands, and shook them violently, and said :

"Well, yes, I do love her with all my heart ; I love her with all my soul ; I love her like a fool, like the imbecile I am. Promise me never to mention her to me, or I will never see you again as long as I live."

M. Pointal gazed at him in profound amazement ; he was struck by the change which had taken place in him, and with the mournful expression of his face, which was almost distorted.

"Ah ! my dear boy," he said at length, "I had no suspicion that the wound was so deep. Forgive me for my stupid pleasantries ; I will refrain for the future. But command me : is there not some way—"

Lionel laid the palm of his right hand over the notary's mouth, exclaiming, "Hush, M. Pointal ; an old notary never ought to talk nonsense."

At these words he walked rapidly away. Twenty minutes later, after traversing the Cour du Carrousel, he leaned his elbows on the parapet of the quay, before crossing the bridge, and remained for some moments motionless, gazing at the red reflection of the lamps in the Seine, where long serpents of fire trembled and twisted, throughout the breadth of the stream. At the extremity of each of these serpents Lionel fancied he saw a dark head, whose sparkling eyes bade him defiance from the depths of the water.

"What !" thought he, "she, always she, even in the depths of the Seine !"

He resumed his way, furious with himself, with the tenacity of his memory, with the powerlessness of his will, with all the gentry, all their daughters, all women in general. But M. Pointal had belied him ; he did not mix up the government in his indignation. He ended by thinking of that very unhappy person, who had, however, finally been comforted, and had erected an altar to Time, the God of Consolation. "Eh ! yes," he said to himself, "one does console one's self, in course of time, for everything : we need only to help ourselves."

When he had regained his lodgings, he stood with his foot on the threshold and withdrew the key from the lock ; he cast a glance round his chamber, and that poor chamber smiled at him. It seemed to him that he was not alone ; that there was some one there who had been thinking of him during his absence—some one who was waiting for him, and who was about to seat herself at his table to work with him, elbow to elbow, eye to eye. He was not mistaken : if he had not espoused Mlle. de Saligneux, he had espoused Poverty, and that good housekeeper always accompanies us ; she is always present ; she thrusts her finger into every detail of our existence ; she never forgets us, and never permits us to forget her.

XVI.

It is related that Abbas Pasha, Viceroy of Egypt, always lived alone. Hating cities and men, invisible to his people as well as to strangers, his favorite re-

treats were sumptuous palaces which he had built in the desert. He shut himself up there with ferocious beasts which he collected in his menageries, and with a small number of cringing, trembling servants, who shuddered at his frowns. His end was as tragic as his life had been solitary : two of his slaves strangled him in his sleep.

After the violent scene which he had had with his son, after the tearing and burning of the note, after the miscarriage of the scheme which was so dear to him, the life which M. Têterol led at the White House resembled that of Abbas Pasha in his solitary palaces. To tell the truth, he had no menageries, but his watchdogs, well provided with teeth, and always barking, took their place. He took no pleasure, except in the society of his bulldog, with his black, hanging lips ; he gave him sugar and the whip by turns, and the docile animal allowed himself to be sugared and whipped with equal submission ; he was the only being who loved M. Têterol as M. Têterol wished to be loved. This hermit lived shut up inside the walls of his inclosure, or, to express it more nearly, in his savage grief, which was a fortress or a prison. From morning till night, always grumbling, always in motion, stormy and morose, he hectored and overworked his people, and drove them to despair. His temper, which had formerly been terrible, had become peevish. His only joy was to spy on his servants and work-people, to catch them in fault if possible ; when he succeeded in this, he gave way to outbursts which relieved him. He mingled the wrath which he nursed

against his rebellious heir with all the incidents of his days ; he ate it with his bread, he drank it with his wine, he breathed it in the air, and wreaked it on every one who approached him. In the evening especially, after dinner, when he thought of the counter-deed destroyed before his very eyes, everything turned red before his sight ; he felt an imperious need of breaking something. Joseph, his valet, who suspected the state of the case, kept prudently at a distance. Weeks passed, and M. Têterol broke no one ; but his wrath did not diminish. The man's heart was made of granite, like his head and arms, and time passed over his implacable rancor without smoothing down the angles. More fortunate than Abbas Pasha, he was not strangled in his sleep ; but it is probable that his people formed very uncharitable wishes with regard to him, and that they would have quitted his service had he not taken the precaution to pay them well, and never to make them wait for their money.

One morning he received the following letter, which M. Pointal addressed to him without Lionel's knowledge :

“MY OLD FRIEND : Is it possible that you have quarreled with your son, who is so good a son, whom you have never had occasion to complain of, and that by your harshness you are compromising a career which was beginning so brilliantly ? I met Lionel the other day. Ah ! my friend, if you only knew where the Prince of Wales is living, and what he eats, your paternal pride would bleed. Come, make an effort to

overcome your resentment, which I find it difficult to understand ; but, were you ten times in the right, anger passes, affection remains. Write me a few lines which I can show Lionel ; he will go to you at once, and all will be settled before five days have expired. It is needless to say that he does not know of my application to you, and which I beg of you, in the name of our old friendship, to take in good part."

M. Têterol dipped his pen instantly into the ink-stand, and traced the following reply in his large, heavy hand :

"MY DEAR FRIEND : I don't care a straw whether Lionel eats at the Café Anglais or in a cook-shop, or not at all ; whether he lives in an attic or a palace ; whether he amuses himself or is bored with his mistress ; whether he makes debts, which I shall not pay, or whether he does nothing ; and it concerns me no more than the man in the moon. I was weak enough to adore that boy. He has failed in respect toward me, he has despised my will, he has braved and insulted me ; I have torn him from my heart, and I don't wish to hear his name uttered again. You say that you write without his knowledge ; I don't believe one word of it. He regrets his good milch cow, who let herself be milked so easily. So much the worse for him ; let him learn to work ! You know what sacrifices I have made for him ; he shall never have another sou from his father. Henceforth he is a stranger and dead to me. You assure me that anger is a tem-

porary emotion ; I know that mine is eternal, and I know too that, having never forced my advice on any one, I don't care to receive any. Let the matter rest there, and believe me your servant."

The day after he had dispatched this reply, M. Têterol received a call from M. Crépin, who had not been to see him for a long time, having no bargain to conclude with him ; but the commercial agent of Bourg had just learned from a certain person belonging to Saligneux, a great newsmonger, that the potentate of the White House had fallen out with his son. He had taken advantage of his first half-holiday to get into the train, and then into the omnibus, and had hastened thither, being one of those crows who scent corpses. He reached the White House at the moment when M. Têterol, half reclining on a sofa after dinner, was holding converse with his gloomy thoughts. He had the air of an old, wounded lion, seeking whom he may devour ; but M. Crépin, frail as he was, approached lions familiarly, and feared no rebuffs when he had anything to gain. He entered the cave with a bold countenance, with his lips pursed up, saying :

"It is a long time, M. Têterol, since I had the pleasure of seeing you, and I was anxious to come and inquire after your amiable health. You are well ?"

M. Têterol shrugged his shoulders and looked askance at him. "When will you give up your habit, M. Crépin, of asking idiotic questions ?"

"Excuse me ; I know that you are as hearty as an

oak. But I think your face looks rather worried to-day."

"My face is the same as it is every day," retorted the terrible man, testily. "I suppose I ought to have a special face when I have the honor of receiving the illustrious M. Crépin in my house?"

The ex-steward made a low bow, and said: "At least it is permissible to inquire after your son? He is here, without doubt, and I hope you will introduce me to the fine fellow."

The old man shouted, "I forbid you to speak of him to me!"

"Why?" asked M. Crépin, feigning surprise.

"Don't pry into my affairs."

"I would not do such a thing; I am the least curious man in the world; but I did not think I should render myself unpleasant to you by speaking of that delightful and distinguished young man who has the happiness of being your son, and in whom you glory, whom you adore—"

"I hate him!" interposed M. Têterol, and pressed the commercial agent's wrist so hard between his finger and thumb that he almost broke it.

M. Crépin could not withhold a cry of pain. "Ah, excuse me; I have nothing to do with it," he said, shaking his hand to make sure that it still held to his arm. "But what does this mean, and what reproach have you to make against this adored son? Has he decamped?"

"You actually imagine that I am going to tell you my affairs."

M. Crépin made a pretense of going away. "I see that I have come at an inopportune moment," said he. "God keep you in peace, M. Têterol ! I will return some other day, when you are less nervous."

"Remain. I order you to do so," returned M. Têterol, brutally, putting his hand on his shoulder to force him to reseal himself. Ten minutes later, yielding to the desire of reviewing his grievances by relating them, he was occupied in telling the whole story in detail, and he accompanied his discourse with fierce gestures and many imprecations. When he had finished—

"Your son is a queer dog," exclaimed M. Crépin, who had listened to the tale with the most religious attention. "Zounds ! refuse a Saligneux ! The young gentleman is very fastidious. He must have some tie."

"Do I need you to tell me that ? His mother made him so ; she had an oriental imagination."

"You must decide on a course of conduct, M. Têterol. A father's will amounts to very little when a woman has taken possession of a young man."

"Do you understand me, Master Crépin ? A father is everything."

"That is your opinion, but not the opinion of husbands."

"A father is everything, I tell you," repeated M. Têterol, vehemently. "A father has the right to command, countermand, arrange, disarrange—to make and unmake anything he chooses."

"Parbleu ! old Saturn ate his children with a little salt, and it is said that he digested them very easily."

"What have I to do with your Saturn? I am speaking of my son."

"Of course; and I declare that his conduct seems to me inexcusable. Mlle. de Saligneux is such a charming person!"

"I am vexed that I cannot agree with you; I think her very disagreeable," replied the contradictory old man.

"Since when? It seems to me that formerly—"

"I tell you that she is a haughty prude, an impertinent minx; she thought me a beast, and that my plan had not common-sense. If your Baron de Saligneux were to come to me to-day and offer me his daughter on his knees, and if my son were to ask me for her with clasped hands, I would say No, a thousand times No. I have returned to my first idea, which was a good one. No marriage: Saligneux shall belong to me, and to me alone. If I must wait four years, I will wait four years; but I assure you that it will be accomplished before the lapse of two years. Have you any objections to offer, Master Crépin?"

"I? None at all. Only I don't understand very clearly what you blame your son for."

"My son is insolent, and I will disinherit him," cried M. Téterol, clinching his fists and gnashing his teeth.

"Nonsense! fathers cannot disinherit their sons any more; the Code forbids it."

"Do you mean to put me in a rage? My money belongs to me, I think. Did my son earn it?"

"It is yours; spend it. But you are not a spend-

thrift, and your son will have what is left at your death; or at least a good share of it. Article 913: 'Bequests cannot exceed the half of the testator's property, if he leaves at his decease a legitimate child.'"

"Leave me alone with your Code; it is a foolish book."

"Bah! there is a means of making use of it. But, M. Têterol, do you know what I would do if I were in your place?"

"You are going to utter some folly; don't restrain yourself—go on."

"M. Têterol, the worst turn a father can do his son is simply to marry again."

"I marry again!" exclaimed M. Têterol, struck with the strangeness of the idea, which was quite new to him, and seemed absurd. "I told you you were going to utter some folly!"

"Folly? why? You are still strong and in a splendid state of preservation, my dear Têterol; you have all your teeth; you are one of those men who have no age. Marry again, have ten children by your second wife, and I know some one who will be finely overreached."

"And, no doubt, you would do your best to find me a wife."

"That would not be difficult," replied M. Crépin quickly. "But we must make a good choice. I think the second Mme. Têterol should be agreeable to look at, without being too pretty; all pretty women are coquettes. You understand me—an agreeable plainness; would that suit you? I think also that she

ought not to be very young. Don't talk to me of young lasses ; they are hard to look after ; they are exacting and pretentious. As to the dowry, let us not mention that ; do you need an heiress ? If she has nothing, she will be utterly dependent upon you, and you will be able to make her execute your wishes, should they be ten thousand. Yet I think she should have laid aside some savings, amassed a modest little hoard ; that will prove that she is orderly and well-conducted. M. Têterol, ugly or pretty, rich or poor, the essential point is that she should have simple tastes, a steady mind, judgment, experience—all the qualities of an excellent housekeeper. Oh ! leave it to me ; we will find all this for you."

While M. Crépin was talking, M. Têterol was reflecting. He recollected having heard him say that he had an elderly sister, rather set in her ways, destined from all appearances to remain an old maid, who had been living in England for several years, where she was lady's companion in a rich *bourgeois* family.

M. Crépin recoiled when M. Têterol replied with a sarcastic smile, "My opinion is, my dear Crépin, that you will perhaps be obliged to cross the channel to find me that treasure."

The commercial agent soon raised his crest again. "My sister !" he exclaimed ; "you think I am proposing my sister ? I was a thousand leagues from thinking of her. But, do you know, the idea is not a bad one. Would you like to see her ? It costs nothing."

"Many thanks ; you are a thousand times too good," said M. Têterol. "I have served my time, and

my repose is dear to me. The most discreet women are mischief-makers, the most reasonable have their grain of folly. No, I will not encumber myself with a petticoat, and the vengeance I will take on my son shall be to live a hundred years at least."

"As you please!" replied M. Crépin, and rose to take leave. He had scattered the seed on the ground, and he trusted to the sun, the rain, and the seasons to make it spring up.

One must never brag of living a hundred years; it brings bad luck. Four or five weeks after he had uttered this memorable and daring phrase, M. Têterol, who was as strong as a green oak—M. Têterol, who had never had neuralgia, or an inflamed tooth, or even a serious cold, fell seriously and dangerously ill. It was his own fault. One morning he perceived that three chickens were missing from his poultry-yard, and he thought he discovered traces of a foot in the middle of one of his flower-beds, whence he inferred that the robbers were in the habit of making nightly visits. He would not leave his watchmen to look for them, he would have been too happy to seize them by the throat with his own hands! The result was that he passed a night out of doors in the middle of December.

The next day he felt somewhat unwell; he had an attack of shivering accompanied by a little dry cough. Still he went out, and attended to his ordinary occupations. In the evening he was much worse, and during the night had a strong attack of fever. Nevertheless, he was on his feet at six o'clock

in the morning ; but the shivering and cough redoubled in violence, and he felt a sharp pain, a stitch in his side. He sent off Joseph, his valet, who advised him to go to bed again and to send for the doctor. This proposition had the effect of an insult upon him. To be sick like a simple mortal ! to need a doctor—he, Jean Têterol, who had never needed any one ! Yet his illness increased so much during the day, that he became uneasy, and sent in great haste for M. Lobineau, the doctor of the canton. M. Lobineau found that his pulse was quick, his cheeks burning, and ordered him to take to his bed and remain there.

What tormented M. Têterol the most during his confinement to his bed was not the chill, nor the painful heat which he felt in his chest, nor the stitch in his side, nor the cough, nor the difficulty of breathing : he made up his mind to all that ; but he experienced a sentiment of profound humiliation in seeing himself tied to his bed—he, the strong man, the invulnerable man, who was always on his feet. He found himself reduced to the condition of common people. It was an insolence on the part of Nature, a crime of leze-majesty for the fever to have dared to attack him. The anxieties of a proprietor were joined to the torment of his pride. What was to become of the White House ? He fancied he saw his closets given up to pillage, and his servants occupied in plundering them. Every noise seemed suspicious : he trembled continually for his keys, for his silver, his plate, his linen, his furniture. He had always dis-

trusted everybody ; his distrust became a mania. One day, M. Crépin having come to see him, he said :

"My dear M. Crépin, Joseph is staying a very long time in the kitchen ; pray go and see what he is about."

Joseph having returned, he said to him, "Joseph, my good Joseph, where is M. Crépin ? I beg of you, go and see what mischief he is up to outside."

A few minutes later he said to M. Lobineau, "Doctor, where are Joseph and M. Crépin ? I conjure you, go and see what they are doing." When M. Lobineau returned, he found him with his legs already out of bed, intending to look through the keyhole to see what M. Lobineau was doing in the next room. The doctor lectured him severely on his imprudence, and considered it necessary to inform him that he was in a bad way, that he had acute pneumonia.

"Pneumonia !" exclaimed M. Têterol. "Can one—is it possible—can it happen—"

"Yes, imprudent people do die of it," replied M. Lobineau.

Jean Têterol could die ! This extravagant, senseless, truly outrageous idea, had never occurred to him. He believed firmly that everybody died, of course ; but as to himself ! he had worked and toiled so hard, was he to go away miserably and leave his property to others ! Others would pry into his affairs ! others would handle his keys, his precious keys ! others would unceremoniously open his drawers, his drawers which belonged to him, and would

see what was in them ! others would plunder his papers, rummage in his desk ! At this thought he became indignant, furious. No, that was not possible. It seemed to him that his death would leave a void, a frightful void in the universe ! that when he should have disappeared, there would be nothing left, nothing at all. Of what use would the sun be thenceforth—the sun which he employed to light his glory and to ripen his wheat ? When Jean Têterol was no longer there, the sun would have nothing more to do.

So he concluded that M. Lobineau was a downright fool, and that this fool was perhaps in the pay of M. de Saligneux. His first impulse was to beg him to leave the room and never appear before him again ; after which he hurled a glass of tisane at the head of Joseph, who had presented it awkwardly, so that a few drops of it had fallen on the counterpane of his bed. Then M. Lobineau in his deepest voice declared solemnly that when his patients were unreasonable he could not answer for their lives. M. Têterol looked at his eyes, and calmed down suddenly. Up to that time he had obeyed only half his prescriptions ; for a prescription resembles an order, and he was in the habit of giving orders, not of receiving them. From that moment he was as docile as a lamb ; he allowed himself to be cupped, and let the doctor apply as many leeches as he pleased. He said, in a tone which was almost gentle : “ See, doctor, I am tranquil. Must I hold myself so ? Is not my arm in your way ? Speak ; you have only to mention it, and I will do anything you like.” And he added to him-

self, "When I am on my feet again, you shall pay for this !"

Nevertheless, on the second day after this he had a fresh fit of rage. M. Lobineau, who was beginning to be seriously uneasy about the state of his patient, confided his anxiety to the Abbé Miraud ; and the good curé, who came every morning to inquire after M. Têterol, made an effort to conquer his own timidity, and ventured to ask him, with many circumlocutions, whether he did not think it would be advisable to inform his son and summon him.

M. Têterol made a violent gesture, and replied, "I will never again see that monster of ingratitude."

"I know that you have had a crow to pluck with him," answered the curé. "I am acquainted with your grievances, and I am willing to admit that they are very serious. Yield to a good impulse, M. Têterol ; a son is always a son."

"An ingrate is not a son," he replied.

Then the good curé, plucking up his courage, began a long discourse representing to him that we ought to pardon those who have offended us, if we wish eternal justice to pardon our sins ; that it is dangerous to present ourselves before the divine tribunal with hatred in our heart ; and that heaven belongs to the merciful and indulgent.

M. Têterol interrupted him, exclaiming, "For whom do you take me ? Go tell your stories to old women ! Do you think I believe those fables ?" and seizing in his nervous, trembling hand the key to his desk, which he wore suspended to his neck between his

shirt and his flannel vest, he showed it to him, saying, "M. le Curé, I believe in that." Then he turned toward the wall.

The next night was a bad one, and it seemed as if all was over with the proprietor of the White House. Midnight had just struck, when he distinctly perceived the spectre, Death. He was standing beside his pillow; it was certainly he, with his short nose, bare, polished skull, hollow eye-sockets, with an indescribable something about him which makes him of all things in the world the most expected and unexpected, the most certain and the most incredible, the most real and the most impossible. Têterol talked a long time to him, as though he did not know he was deaf. He said: "You have mistaken the door; you did not come for me. Take some one else; take anybody you please; take the Abbé Miraud, who is very much broken down, and who believes in God; take Joseph, who is so awkward; take my laborers, my domestics, who are lazy; take Dr. Lobineau, who is a fool. I have still many things to do! I have not carried out my idea. Come back in five years—in six years; but to-day—that would cause the baron too much pleasure. I give you him, and his daughter, his sister, his valets, his whole house; take them all, but go away from here." Death did not answer; he fixed upon him his sightless eyes, and Têterol saw that he was deaf. He was seized with mortal agony; an icy sweat broke out on his body. He made a supreme effort to raise his hands; he joined them, as in former days, in the form of a cup, and the two hands, in which he had

formerly seen so many things—fields, meadows, vineyards, orchards in bloom, châteaux, marriages, revenge—now showed him nothing, absolutely nothing, look at them as he would; they exhaled an odor of earth which had been lately turned over, and they were as empty as the grave which was awaiting his body. Then he thought he could feel that he was passing away, that his heart ceased to beat, that the cold was gaining on him, that life was leaving him, that his idea was escaping him, and his brain growing empty; that he was entering into nothingness and the gloomy depths of a silence which was full of terror. He shut his eyes; then he tried to touch the precious key which he wore at his neck, and which was really the key to his happiness, the key of his soul: his powerless fingers could not reach it, and he comprehended that all was over, that his will was broken against an inexorable prohibition.

Several hours later, when M. Lobineau came to inquire after the state of his patient, whom he had given up, M. Têterol was sleeping soundly. He awoke at last, but before opening his eyes he held counsel with himself for a few minutes to find out where he was; he felt about him, as it were, and discovered that the crisis was past, and that he was still alive. He succeeded in sitting up, tore off the handkerchief which was knotted around his throat, threw it at the foot of his bed, and, looking at his physician with a cunning smile, said:

“You are very much surprised, doctor; only fools allow themselves to die.”

A week afterward he was on his feet again, well and lively, in possession of his appetite, of his land, his bureau, and his papers. Nevertheless, he had not undergone this ordeal with impunity. When a man has talked with Death face to face for a whole night, some trace of it remains ; it is impossible to forget all he has said. M. Têterol had less confidence in himself ; he was no longer so fully convinced that his will was stronger than all else, and that he had no need of any one. His house seemed to him rather deserted, and solitude frightened him ; but the idea of a reconciliation with his son never occurred to him. He reflected deeply on the insinuations M. Crépin had made. He said to himself that, if he succeeded in procuring a wife still more docile than his first, and with much less intelligence, who would adopt all his opinions, who would be his very humble servant, his house would be more agreeable ; that he would have a scapegoat at hand, on whom he could try his strength and vent his rage ; that she would be always there to reply when he happened to be in a humor for talking ; that she would mount guard over his locks ; and, in case of sickness, she could present his tisane without spilling half of it on the bed-clothes, like that arrant blockhead Joseph. He ruminated this thought for two days ; he made inquiries. The Abbé Miraud knew Mlle. Crépin, and informed him, without suspecting his project, that she was as much of a nonentity as could be desired ; that she not only had not an oriental imagination, but that she had none at all ; that she was moreover an excellent, easy-tempered person, with

gentle manners, and irreproachable in her conduct. One consideration alone restrained M. Têterol ; he could not think without melancholy of the pleasure he should afford M. Crépin by marrying his sister, of the great honor he should do him by becoming his brother-in-law. What should he do? Leave his home, put himself out to go in search of a woman? That was unbecoming in a sultan. He would have liked to have all the marriageable young ladies of the department present themselves some morning at the White House, to be passed in review, "awaiting his caprice and intriguing for his handkerchief." But even sultans cannot do everything they like. He decided to accept the good offices and the proposition of the knave whom he despised. He resolved that the first commandment of the decalogue which he would teach his new wife should be as follows: "You will recollect that your brother is a clown who married you to M. Têterol from motives of interest; you are never to speak to him of your affairs or mine; and, to make the matter more sure, you will take advantage of the first opportunity to quarrel with him, and turn him out of doors."

One day, when M. Crépin came to see him, he kept him to dinner, and at dessert he said to him, winking with his right eye:

"Well, sir, have you found her?"

"Whom?"

"The incomparable woman whom you intend for me."

"Ah! excuse me," exclaimed M. Crépin, seizing

the ball on the rebound, "my proposition was so badly received—"

"It was absurd, and is so still."

"In that case, let us speak of something else," replied the commercial agent.

And they did talk of other things; but after the expiration of a few minutes M. Têterol said, winking this time with the left eye, "Since you wish it, write to her, M. Crépin."

"To whom?"

"Eh! don't play the innocent; but listen attentively. You will do better not to tell her what you want of her, for I bind myself to nothing. I am not the man to buy a pig in a poke, and I mean to retain full liberty as to my decisions. Invent some pretext to bring her here, and if necessary I will pay the expenses of the journey. When she has arrived, I will examine her; if she suits me, we will see."

He spoke as if it were a cow to be bought at a fair. That evening, M. Crépin wrote two letters, which he dispatched, one to London, the other to Paris. The Abbé Miraud, having succeeded in procuring M. Pointal's address, had announced M. Têterol's illness to him, in order that he might inform Lionel. The latter was preparing to set out for Saligneux, when a second dispatch from the curé informed him that the sick man was out of danger. His emotion had been intense. The thought that his father might die without being reconciled to him tormented him. He decided to write to him, to express his strong desire to see him. His letter concluded thus:

"I have refused to marry according to your wishes : it is probable that I shall never marry. One thing is certain, I shall never marry without your consent. I beg you to forgive the grief I have occasioned you, and to give me back your affection. You have been sick, and strangers and hirelings have taken care of you. Why did you not send for me? Am I no longer anything to you? Promise me that in future you will have no nurse but me."

M. Têterol did not condescend to reply to this letter ; he handed the task over to M. Crépin, who discharged it as follows :

"MONSIEUR : I am sorry to inform you that, after the violent scenes which have taken place between you and your father, he desires to remain some time longer without seeing you. Although he is convalescing, his doctor orders him to avoid all painful emotions ; he would suffer them if he were to see you again. If he has well-founded complaints against you, you must not think that he regrets the marriage to which you would not consent ; if the marriage were still possible, he would not listen to it ; he will never forgive M. de Saligneux and his daughter for the dishonorable course they took in the affair. As for the rest, he takes note of your promise never to marry without his consent ; he thinks it the least return you owe him. As a reward for your good sentiments, he desires me to announce to you that you can spare yourself all uneasiness on his score for the future ; he will not be left to the care of strangers and hirelings again, as he has

decided shortly to marry again. He has no doubt that this resolution will be agreeable to you, and he hastens to acquaint you with it, in order to reassure your filial solicitude, for which he is much obliged to you.

"Believe, monsieur, I pray you, in the very devoted sentiments of your very humble servant,

"NICOLAS CRÉPIN."

XVII.

IF M. Téterol had supposed that he would drive his son to despair by announcing to him that he was about to marry again, he was much mistaken. In Lionel's present state of mind, possessed as he was by the desire to owe everything to himself, he would readily have renounced all his rights to an inheritance with which he had been reproached beforehand. "May we be many to share it," he thought, after reading M. Crépin's letter; "if it had come to me alone, it would have weighed me down like a mill-stone." As far as the rest was concerned, he was too busy, his head was too full of ambition and hopes, of plans and regrets, to allow his father's revenge to affect him deeply. His *début* in journalism had been of the happiest description; a few months had sufficed for him to take his rank and place, to distinguish his name. It was not fame, but it was the dawn of it, and the dawn has a certain sweetness which the full noonday's sun lacks. He had relinquished his solitude; he often quitted his cell to cultivate his former relations and to form new

ones, knowing well that chamber politics are but sorry affairs, and that it is as necessary to mix with the world as it is dangerous to give one's self wholly up to it. His presence, his success, the agreeableness of his manners, the character of his mind, procured him everywhere an eager welcome. He was not insensible to the flattering attentions of which he was the object ; he had some self-love, however pure his character was. Absolute disinterestedness is a chimera, and self-seeking is only hateful when there is nothing beneath it. Lionel was ambitious and determined to make his mark, but he had a horror of crooked ways or disgraceful means ; he meant to win the game by fair play ; he wished to become a person of importance, in order to serve the cause which was dear to him, whose hopes he confounded with his own, and whose future he classed with his own fate. "And Mlle. de Saligneux," you say—"did he still think of her?" Alas ! yes. "So he had not succeeded in forgetting her?" He had tried in vain to do so. "And he loved her as much as ever?" He flattered himself that he loved her no more. She inspired him with a sentiment which resembled hate. He labored obstinately to demolish his idol, by dint of repeating to himself incessantly, "Go, you are insignificant of mind and heart !" and he ended by believing it. He also endeavored to persuade himself that his eyes had misled him ; that the beauty of this brunette was very doubtful, and that a pretty woman's first duty is to be a blonde. This idea pursued him in all the *salons* which he frequented ; he sought for a blonde with whom he could conscien-

tiously declare he was wildly in love. Month succeeded month, and he did not find her ; but he did not cease to believe that he was cured.

One day, as he was passing through the Rue de la Paix, on his way to make a call, he perceived that he had forgotten his gloves. He entered the shop of a fashionable glover, who had supplied him in his days of prosperity, to purchase a pair. He had been there a few minutes when he saw a coupé stop, and the door opened by a footman in maroon livery. The next moment an old woman, with a solemn tread, entered the store, followed by a young girl. Lionel did not know the old lady, who was called the Countess de Juines, but he recognized the young girl even before he saw her face. All his blood receded to his heart ; he wished he were a thousand leagues away. He retired to the back of the shop, as the best thing he could do, hoping that they would leave the place shortly. He was mistaken. Mme. de Juines had spindling hands which were difficult to fit, and her tastes were too particular not to require a great deal of time in making all her purchases. Mlle. de Saligneux, who knew it, sat down on a chair, and unfolded and began attentively to read a paper which her footman had just bought her at a news-stand. Lionel had put on his gloves and paid for them ; nothing was left for him but to go ; he decided to do so. Unfortunately, Mlle. de Saligneux was seated near the door ; it was impossible to go out without passing before her. He passed with his head in the air and his eyes turned away ; but he knew, as he shut the shop-door, that

Mlle. de Saligneux had looked at him, that the paper she was reading was the one he wrote for, and that she was occupied in meditating on an article which he was satisfied with and proud of. He knew, too, that both brunette and blonde idols revenge themselves on their destroyers, and that a man often fancies he is cured when he is not.

The next day Lionel received a note from M. Pointal, with whom he was in the habit of dining once a week. The notary wrote that he depended on him for the following Monday; and he added: "Do not be displeased, but we shall have a *tête-à-tête* for once. Do not disappoint me; I do not like to dine alone."

Lionel was prompt to the appointment. During the repast they discussed the questions of the day, and they bickered; M. Pointal insisted that politics were only invented for that purpose. On leaving the table he begged his guest to accompany him to the Rue de Ponthieu, whither he was called by urgent business. "We will smoke our cigars as we walk up the Champs-Élysées," he said. "My call will not detain me, and we will finish our evening in some theatre. I am in a good humor to-day, and I am planning a piece of folly."

As soon as they had reached the bottom of the staircase, suddenly unmasking his batteries, and taking possession of the young man's arm, so that he could not escape him, he exclaimed, "So you have not forgiven her yet?"

"Of whom are you speaking?" replied Lionel, dryly, trying in vain to free his arm. "It was agreed that we should never talk about her."

"At my house, and I have kept my word religiously ; but we are in the street, and once is not always. Ah ! my dear child, this is not right ; you meet her in a shop, and you pretend not to know her."

"She has complained to you ?"

"No ; but she expressed her surprise. Come, now, if you had bowed to her, would it have killed you ?"

"So you see her, and have the honor of receiving her confidences."

"Yes, lately. I must tell you— No, you shall not get away from me ; make up your mind to listen. I was about to tell you that her great-uncle, the Marquis de Virevielle, died of apoplexy three months ago. She had to come to Paris, in the first place for the funeral, and in the next place to take possession of her inheritance, of which I made the inventory, whence you may conclude that we have not lacked opportunities for conversation. That Marquis de Virevielle was a queer man ; like the author of your being, he had an idea. He tenderly loved his grand-niece, who he said was being ruined by the most spendthrift father in the world. He had made her his sole legatee, and, in order that the inheritance might be larger, he lived like a poor man, which was an excellent means of keeping borrowers at a distance. Judge of the amazement of the baron and everybody else when it was known that, all expenses being deducted, Mlle. de Saligneux found herself the mistress of a round million, or, to speak more exactly, of sixty-five thousand livres income."

"Much good may it do her," remarked Lionel.

"Eh ! no. Fortune does not constitute happiness; she has never been more unhappy than since she has been rich."

"What has she to complain of?"

"Ah ! curiosity."

"M. Pointal, talk of to-day's quotations, and I assure you you will interest me more."

"Ah ! the boaster ! What is the use of pretending that you are stronger and more indifferent than in reality you are ? If Mlle. de Saligneux were nothing more to you than the rest of the world, you would have bowed to her in that glove-shop."

"Then why do you persist in speaking of her ?" demanded Lionel, angrily.

"Because I do not like injustice, and I am sure you will pardon that charming girl when you know that she is as much to be pitied as yourself. They insist on marrying her to a man who does not suit her, the Count de Préval, whose acquaintance her father made in St. Petersburg, where the fop was secretary of the embassy, and was bored to death. I will remark in parenthesis that if our Minister of Foreign Affairs knew his business, he would instantly recall all secretaries who are bored, for it is a proof that they have, at the same time, but mediocre minds and little patriotism. This one obtains a leave of absence ; he arrives in Paris, and renews his acquaintance with the baron, who informs him of the inheritance. Being a cautious man, he comes to see me in order to know the exact state of the case ; and, finding himself suffi-

ciently well informed, he gets introduced to the heiress, falls in love with her, asks for her hand. A fine name, a good fortune, amiable manners, conversational powers, a ready wit, imperturbable assurance ! What more would you have ? The young man is a brilliant match. Unfortunately, Mlle. de Saligneux will not hear of him. She demanded, in the first place, that she should be allowed three months in which to mourn for her uncle, to whom she was very much attached. The three months have elapsed ; the Count de Préval has returned to the charge, and, suspecting that I possess some influence over my new client, he has begged me to intercede in his behalf. I refused, as you may suppose, but the baron pleads his cause eloquently. The poor child is subjected to a regular persecution : they beg of her, they lecture her, they pester her, they besiege her, and her aunt, the Countess de Juines, makes it her special charge. Do you know Mme. de Juines ? ”

“ No, and I do not care to know her.”

“ You are right. She is a woman who looks on life as a penance, and who disciplines herself on other people's backs. She has conceived an aversion to her niece, and renders her existence wretched. She has sworn that she will make her marry M. de Préval, with whom she is infatuated, although she has never seen him, for she was not present when he offered himself. She blames the baron for being too weak in this business, and with not knowing how to command. I detest that Gorgon ; I should be delighted if I could play a trick on her. What has she not done ? She re-

quested me to bring the count with me some evening, in hopes that, in the presence of that hero, her niece, being driven to the wall, would not dare to say no, and that she would be able to extort a consent. Does she take me for a marriage-broker? During my long career, I have always taken the part of youth and innocence; so I made haste to warn Mlle. de Saligneux of the trap which was being prepared for her."

"You were wrong, M. Pointal. You should not believe so readily in youth and innocence. My very sincere opinion is, that the Count de Préval would suit Mlle. de Saligneux perfectly. Lend a hand, help on this match, and she will be grateful to you."

"Ah! softly. Although she has not reposed her confidence in me, I suspect her of having some uneasiness in her heart, some tender memory, some secret preference. And did you not yourself once intimate to me that a certain Théodore was in her good graces?"

"Really, I had forgotten Théodore," exclaimed Lionel. "Eh! bon Dieu, let Théodore alone, let her marry him speedily, let the thing be finished; and I beg you to talk of the quotations."

At these words he snatched his cigar from his mouth and threw it on the ground, for the taste seemed bitter and the smoke acrid.

They had reached the Rue de Ponthieu. M. Pointal stopped before a small hotel, situated between courtyard and garden, which presented a modest appearance. This hotel had belonged to the late Marquis de Virevielle for eighteen years.

"Here we are," said the notary. "I must enter this old house to give an answer to an old woman, who is not always entertaining. Walk up and down for a few minutes ; I shall not be long." Then, changing his mind—"Better than that, come in with me. There is a rather complicated question of law in the case, and you will aid us with your advice, M. Lawyer."

Lionel at first declined the proposition, but ended by yielding to the earnest request of M. Pointal, who drew him into the court-yard, and rang the bell. An old servant opened the door.

"Are the ladies at home?" asked M. Pointal. "It is unnecessary to show us the way or to announce us ; you know I am acquainted with their habits, and we are expected."

Immediately seizing Lionel's arm again, which he was resolved not to let go, he ascended with him a stone staircase, the steps of which were worn and broken. The next instant he pushed him into a drawing-room, where there was an oval table lighted by a lamp, and at this table sat two women, one busy with her embroidery and the other reading. Lionel had met these ladies a few days before in a glove-shop.

"Ah ! it is you, M. Pointal !" exclaimed the Countess de Juines, rising precipitately to come toward him.

"Madame la Comtesse, you make me play a very singular part this evening, one that is very delicate, very compromising for a notary. Do not you know that notaries are forbidden to act outside of their

offices, under penalty of being suspended from their duties for three months, and dismissed in case of a repetition of the offence? Fortunately my hair is gray, and I am negotiating the sale of my practice. However, your will be done, whatever comes of it !”

He bowed respectfully, made his way to the door, and disappeared. Confounded, stunned by this turn of affairs, Lionel, who thought he must be dreaming—Lionel, whose brain was whirling, did not think of following him. He saw indistinctly, but through the mist he perceived two large brown eyes, whose glance held him rooted to the spot.

Meanwhile, Mlle. de Saligneux had risen also, and seemed disposed to beat a retreat.

“Remain, mademoiselle,” said her aunt imperiously ; “your presence is necessary.” Then turning to Lionel, she added with a nobly gracious smile, “Welcome, my dear count ; I was anxious to make your acquaintance.”

“You mistake, madame,” replied Lionel ; “I am not the Count de Préval.”

She smiled again, more graciously than before ; he had not spoken loud enough to make himself heard by madame’s rebellious ear. He was about to repeat his reply ; but Mlle. de Saligneux, who had approached under cover of pushing forward a chair, said lightly and rapidly :

“Monsieur, I take all this on myself ; moreover, you are in my house, and I am so unhappy that allowance may be made for me. Leave Mme. de Juines in

her error ; she will say things to you which I cannot say, and which will perhaps interest you."

Lionel was bewildered, and knew not where he was ; but the big brown eyes fascinated him. He renounced his attempt to undeceive the countess ; he seated himself, and waited for what was to follow.

"My dear count," resumed Mme. de Juines, with majestic affability, "my brother has informed me of your application to him ; the proposal you made him has his entire approbation, and I wished to tell you that it has mine also."

"That is not sufficient," cried Mlle. de Saligneux.

"I beg you, monsieur," pursued Mme. de Juines, "not to attach any importance to my niece's remarks ; she is a child. But fear nothing ; you have her consent, and I answer for it that she will submit with a very good grace."

"Eh ! yes ; I consent to submit," exclaimed Mlle. de Saligneux, "but on one condition !"

"What is that condition ?"

"I desire that you explain frankly to monsieur the reasons I may have for not marrying the Count de Préal."

"What ! Claire, you mean that I am to relate—"

"I exact it," she interrupted. "I wish him to know all, so that he may make up his mind with a full knowledge of the circumstances. It is his right. Is it not so, monsieur ?"

Lionel remained as motionless and speechless as a statue.

"Monsieur declares that it is his right," she con-

tinued, bending down to her aunt's ear. "He wishes to know all."

"A very heavy task is imposed upon me, my dear count," resumed Mme. de Juines. "I am obliged to inform you that there exists in the world a certain Jean Têterol—I think that is his name—a nobody who has become a millionaire, and who imagines that his millions will serve him for any purpose, even to bring down the stars. What would you have? There are such people as the Têterols; perhaps you have encountered some of them yourself."

Lionel bowed deeply, in token of affirmation.

"The one of whom I am speaking," went on Mme. de Juines, "had conceived the most unheard-of, the most astounding project. How shall I tell you? Just imagine, the wretch has a son, and on occasions my poor brother has been embarrassed for want of money. This Têterol took advantage of the fact, and forced from him a written promise—do not insist on me finishing the sentence. Ah! if I had suspected—but I knew nothing until later. So this foolish youth comes in person to offer his heart to my niece, who, I must do her the justice to say, gave him a piece of her mind in sufficiently strong terms. There is good in the child, she only lacks form, which you can teach her."

Perceiving that she was drifting away from her subject, Mlle. de Saligneux said: "And what happened next, madame?"

"Then it came to pass that this young man, who is a trifle less extravagant than his father, comprehend-

ed the enormity of his conduct, withdrew his pretensions, and tore up or burned the promise which an unscrupulous booby had extorted from the baron. It appears that his father took the affair in bad part, that they quarreled, and that the poor fellow is now living in a garret, where neither you nor I will be likely to go in search of him."

"No doubt, madame, he is perfectly happy there," answered Lionel, who had just recovered his voice.

"That is not the case, monsieur," exclaimed Mlle. de Saligneux; "I appeal to M. Pointal. But, aunt, you have not finished your story."

"Ah! I will tell all. The end of the story is, that in consequence of certain events a sudden change has come over the mind of the foolish girl, and that that young man, whom she thought commonplace, disagreeable, foppish, odious, has all at once appeared charming to her; but do not feel alarmed, he does not know it, and never will."

"In truth," interposed Claire, "I should never have had the courage to make such a confession to him; it was necessary that some one should undertake the task for me. But what do you think of it, monsieur? Do you not think that this burner of notes deserved a recompense?"

"All that is pure childishness, I repeat it, my dear count," exclaimed Mme. de Juines. "My niece has never seen this Lionel since, and will never see him again. Would to Heaven he were here! If she could see him sitting beside you, she would undoubtedly make comparisons hardly flattering to him; she would

understand the difference between a young man of our rank and a Têterol. What do you think, made-moiselle?"

"It seems to me, aunt," she replied, "that there's some truth in what you say, and that I have no further need of comparison or reflection. If monsieur still wants me, after the tale you have told, I will end, as I promised, by submitting with a good grace."

"I knew my plan was good," exclaimed Mme. de Juines, triumphantly, "and that all that was necessary, my dear count, to conquer her refusal was to bring you here."

Lionel closed his eyes, and opened them again, to make sure that he was not asleep. Then, advancing his head, he said to Mlle. de Saligneux, "But, if this is the case, who is Théodore?"

She drew near, and replied, in a quick tone: "Ah! Théodore! I must explain at last who Théodore is. Monsieur, Théodore is a singular person who occupies much of my attention, of whom I am excessively afraid, whom I detest, and who does not exist. Yes, he did exist formerly; he was my drawing-master. He had red hair and a snub nose. I had taken a great dislike to him; he returned it, and used to rap my fingers soundly. He has been dead these six years, and yet I see him incessantly. He appears to me like a mysterious, all-powerful, and malevolent being, who is always hovering around me, to play me ugly tricks, like a wicked genius, to whom I attribute every disagreeable thing which happens to me. Whenever I

am troubled, I think of his red hair, his flat nose. When my horse stumbles and falls, I am angry with Théodore. When my father—hush! it is Théodore's fault. If Saligneux had been sold, Théodore would have bought it; and on the day that the Count de Préval proposed for my hand, I exclaimed, "O Théodore! I declared, monsieur, that you should never hold this hand in yours. Will you have it? Here it is. If you refuse to take it, I shall blame Théodore, the mortal enemy of my happiness."

"What is she saying to you, count?" asked Mme. de Juines. "I actually believe she is delivering a speech."

The false Count de Préval proved at that moment that the tender passion is always at fault; that on decisive occasions it knows neither what to say nor what to do; and that people who preserve their presence of mind are not really in love. The only response he could think of was to seize the hand which was offered to him, and press it to his lips; then he hastened to Mme. de Juines, and said to her: "I love you madly, Madame la Comtesse, for I owe to you the happiness of my life."

Thereupon he ran out of the room. He felt the necessity of flying to some solitude with his joy, and of singing it, or rather shouting it, to the stars.

This rather abrupt retreat surprised the countess. She nevertheless remarked: "He is charming. What distinction, what grace! How quickly one recognizes in him the man who is used to good society, the man of the world."

"And, above all, how interesting his conversation was!" added Mlle. de Saligneux.

"He was rather troubled; he will talk more another time," replied Mme. de Juines. "But remember, my dear, that you have given your word, and you cannot take it back."

"I shall not take it back, aunt," she answered. "You see me quite resigned to marrying the man who has just gone out."

Whether she undertook to steal a lily or to marry a man whom she loved, Mlle. de Saligneux was very expeditious in all her enterprises; she had resolved not to wait until the morrow to gain her point. As soon as the Countess de Juines, glorying in her stratagem, in the accuracy of her perception, and the rapidity of her victory, had quitted her to retire to her own room, Claire ordered her coachman to bring the carriage. A few minutes later, accompanied by her maid, she was rolling in the direction of the Rue d'Astorg, where M. de Saligneux had bachelor quarters, under the pretext that the late marquis's hotel was rather small, and that he should crowd his daughter if he remained there. She arrived at a gallop, descended hastily from her carriage, and, without replying to the surly porter's question, ascended the staircase precipitately. Her unexpected appearance threw the baron's valet into the greatest embarrassment, and he barred the way, saying with a frightened air:

"I am sorry, mademoiselle, but M. le Baron is not here."

"Very well ! I will wait, if necessary, until morning," she replied. "But it seems to me that I hear his voice."

The man scratched his ear. "Excuse me, mademoiselle ; monsieur is occupied with business, and he has strictly forbidden—"

"You must know, Baptiste," she interposed, "that I am the most important business he has."

"I must inform him, at least," said Baptiste.

And with a rapid step he traversed the long corridor, where she followed him. She arrived at his heels at the entrance of the dining-room, which had two doors. At the moment that she crossed the threshold of one door, the other opened and shut again noisily.

The baron rushed to meet her, exclaiming, "Who is there ? Who dares—"

"Calm yourself ; it is not a robber, it is I," she replied.

"You !" said M. de Saligneux, who could not succeed in dissimulating his annoyance and the strong displeasure he felt. "What are you here for ? What do you want of me ? It is nearly midnight, and you running about the streets of Paris alone at this hour ! It is improper—"

"Is it ever improper to pay one's father a visit ? Confess now, on your conscience, that you are charmed to see me."

"Delighted, enchanted ! but you have not chosen your time well. I was occupied with business."

"It seems to me that was your business," said she, pointing to a superb dish of Bordeaux crawfish, and a

pâté of partridges with truffles, set out on a fine cloth, which shone with whiteness, in the middle of a well-furnished table.

"I have letters to write," he resumed, "and I was taking a hasty supper."

He turned his head at that moment, saw something suspicious on a chair, and hastened to conceal it by throwing his napkin over it, which he had kept in his hand. Mlle. de Saligneux took advantage of this incident to advance to the middle of the room.

"And you were supping alone?" she asked.

"Alone with my thoughts."

"Here is their plate," said she, without smiling.

In fact, there were two plates on the fine cloth.

"I brought back from the opera," he replied, quickly, "my old friend Dr. Mussard, whom I have not seen for ages; but we had scarcely seated ourselves at the table when he remembered that he had a patient to attend to."

"Indeed! you take good care of your Dr. Mussard!" she observed, gazing at six bottles of champagne arranged in a row on the sideboard.

It must be stated that on great occasions M. de Saligneux never did champagne bottles the honor of emptying them: he drank two glasses, and passed to another bottle, thinking the rest good enough for the servants' hall.

"Ah! what do you want?" he exclaimed, in a tone of feverish impatience. "Say it quickly, and go."

"Give me something to drink first; I am thirsty. Oh! not your champagne. What is this? Clos-

Vougeot? Pour me out a few drops. Ah! not in the doctor's glass if you please—in a clean one."

After she had drunk, she added: "The poor doctor! How he must have cursed his patient who tore him away from this delightful place! For your wine is delicious; it has a slight flavor of raspberry, which is really exquisite."

"And now good-night," said the baron.

He experienced a feeling of consternation on seeing her install herself in an arm-chair, with the air of a person who feels comfortable where she is, and is taking root.

"You understand very well," said she, "that I should not have come if I had not had a very important affair to speak to you about, for I, too, have business."

"You shall tell me about it to-morrow."

"No; this affair admits of no delay. Are you attending to me? Not long ago you reproached me with having foolishly set my heart upon a certain young man, and with being over-excited about him; these were your own expressions. But you said that I should change my mind, and think no more about him at the end of six months. I wish to tell you this evening that six months have elapsed, and I still think of him. You also maintained that if I ever saw him again I should be disenchanted. I wish to tell you this evening that I saw him again quite recently, and that I am not disenchanted."

"That Lionel Têterol again!" he exclaimed. "Where did you see him?"

"At my house."

"Alone?"

"No; my aunt was there."

"She consented to receive him?"

"She took him for M. de Préval; I will tell you the story hereafter; I do not wish to encroach upon your time now; but I wish to inform you that we have about agreed to marry."

The baron stamped his foot. "Claire," said he, "you have got into the detestable habit of making fun of me; it is a game which I do not appreciate."

"I assure you that I was never more serious. This marriage will make everybody happy."

"This marriage shall not take place. Do you suppose that you can dispense with my consent?"

"No, as I have come expressly to ask for it."

"I will never give it—you hear me—never! Enough of this; return at once to your Rue de Ponthieu."

She rose, and the baron's eyes flashed; he thought she would depart. His joy was brief: she sat down again abruptly, saying, "Well, no, it is decided; I will not go until you say yes."

He stamped again. "Ah! my dear, you are abusing my patience, and I really do not know what to think of you. The Count de Préval is well-born, rich, with a charming presence, excellent manners; and you come to talk to me about that Lionel Têterol! Have you, then, no pride? Are you not a Saligneux?"

"You are repeating my aunt's song."

"The words please me, also the air and the music. But there is no use in talking about it ; the count has my word."

"All you have to do is to take it back, and to point out to him that everybody is liable to contradict himself."

"I never contradict myself."

"Ah ! excuse me ; but six months ago you wanted to make me marry M. Lionel Têterol on any terms."

"That is not strictly true ; and if it were—"

"I have a good memory ; I can repeat everything you said to me at that time. You asked me if I had prejudices. Well, yes, I had ; and I have passed days and nights, and whole weeks, in combating them. But they are conquered ; I have none now. You also treated me to an eloquent discourse on the spirit of the age, on old France, on new France. 'Those people are advancing,' you said, 'and we are retiring.' I am afraid I mangle your phrase."

"You do mangle it, and you make me say exactly the opposite of what I did say."

"On your conscience, did you or did you not represent to me that the young man possessed rare merit and a promising future ? M. Pointal will not be the one to contradict you ; he entirely agrees with you. Mon Dieu ! that count whom you extol is well enough, I admit ; but what a difference between the two men ! One is a little old man, an old man of good birth ; the other will always be young ; one is a bore, the other is ambitious. How pleasant it must be for a woman

to have an ambitious husband ! What an interest it gives to life ! I shall help mine, I shall advise him, I shall serve as his assistant, and I assure you that we shall be successful. The day of our departure I examined all our family portraits attentively ; I passed in review all the Saligneux, from the rather apochryphal crusader down to the keeper of the seals ; and I said to them, as I looked them full in the face, ‘ Confess that you are not angry with me, and that you approve what I have in my heart and head. Do you not think it is more interesting to begin than to finish, and that a new life in an old house constitutes perfect happiness ? ’ They deigned to answer me, and all, even the crusader, made me a sign with their heads, saying, ‘ Go, my daughter ; we approve of you, we bless you ; make your father listen to reason. ’

“ Upon my word of honor,” cried the baron, “ she is mad, raving mad ! ”

“ Because I am of your opinion ? Is it my fault if you have changed ? ”

“ No,” he said, warming up ; “ you shall not make me contradict myself. Six months ago the situation was quite different. You had nothing, or next to nothing, and I was not in a condition to give you a dowry. When one has nothing, one resigns one’s self to marrying a Têterol. Eh ! bon Dieu ! I put myself in your place. A woman thinks the world is a hell without diamonds, a coupé, a box at the opera, and, what is worse, a hell of bad company ; and that a life of privations begins when she is under the necessity of entering a cab when she wishes to go from one place to another.

Your case seemed to me deplorable, and I said to myself, 'Let us rescue her from her hell.' But now that you are rich, and you can marry any one you like, to condescend from pure caprice to refuse the Count de Préval in order to marry a young man who scribbles for the papers—"

"Ah! what are you saying? He does not scribble—he writes. I have read all his articles. What talent!"

"Without considering," he continued, "that this journalist perches nobody knows where, and that he is as poor as a church mouse since his quarrel with his father."

"That is his best title to glory. Pray, what was the cause of that quarrel?"

"That is his affair, not mine; and I never meddle with what does not concern me."

"Well, what concerns me is—yes, I will say it—is that I love him."

"You love a young man whom you scarcely know, and whom you have seen for five minutes?"

"What are you thinking of? Five minutes! Add three or four in the Bois de Boulogne, ten on the bank of a river, twenty or more on a garden-seat, and about as many more this evening. See how much that amounts to! And moreover, have you not often declared that love is a thing which comes suddenly one knows not how?"

"Not another word," said he, "or I shall get angry in earnest."

"Oh! I defy you," she replied, smiling.

M. de Saligneux drew himself up, planted himself nobly on his feet, threw his head back, and assumed an air of majestic gravity, which he was in the habit of putting on at the most two or three times a year. At that moment he resembled a patriarch, a Roman senator, or one of the seven wise men of Greece.

"Claire," said he, "I renounce all discussion with you, and I shall not permit you to compromise any longer, in my person, paternal dignity and authority. Your happiness has always been the great, the chief occupation of my life ; and life is a very serious thing, although little girls do not suspect it. Yes, you are only a child ; do you pretend to teach a full-grown man, who has reflected deeply on his duty ? I represent reason and wisdom here, and you plead the cause of caprice and impulse against me. Nothing is more dangerous than impulse ; woe to those who know not how to resist it ! I have the charge of a soul, and a profound feeling of my moral responsibility ; and I swear, by my experience, my reason, my fatherly dignity, that as long as I live you shall not marry M. Lionel Téterol."

Thus speaking, he gently pushed her by the shoulders toward the door. She answered as she went, "And what can I swear by ?" Then she stopped beside the chair where he had flung his napkin.

"I swear," said she, "by this chair, and by what is on it." She said no more, but pulled the napkin away quickly, and then appeared a pretty little woman's hat, very small, very coquettish, very flowery—a

love of a bonnet, a dream, just ready to fly away. She twirled it about on the tip of her finger, and murmured :

"How thoughtless of Dr. Mussard ! he has forgotten his hat."

At these words she glanced at her father. Adieu paternal majesty ! M. de Saligneux lost countenance, and felt himself blush to the roots of his hair ; but, rage getting the upper hand of confusion, he shouted, "Marry whom you please, and go to the devil !"

"Not to the devil," she replied, "but to the Rue de Ponthieu, where I shall announce to Mme. de Juines that M. Lionel Têterol is the son-in-law of your choice."

He shut the door after her ; then opening it again, he called out, "My son-in-law if you will have it so, but not until he is reconciled to his father."

Having said this, he went to find Dr. Mussard.

XVIII.

IN vain did M. Têterol endeavor to forget his son ; he thought of him a hundred times a day. Old and deep passions, idolatrous affections, do not leave the soul so easily. People quarrel, fall out, hate each other, but they do not forget each other. He did not cease to curse the ingrate. He was angry with him, above all, in having succeeded in getting on without his father. He had flattered himself that, in spite of

his refusal to receive him, and of the unpleasant things which he had made M. Crépin write to him, Lionel would soon weary of the life of privation which he was leading, and would knock humbly at the door of the White House, and lie down on the threshold to beg for his forgiveness. Before granting a pardon to the Emperor Henry IV., Pope Gregory VII. made him wait three days, in the garb of a penitent, barefoot, and on his knees in the snow. Perhaps the master of the White House would have gone through the same ceremony with his son ; but Lionel was proud, and M. Têterol's enormous pride had made up its mind never to take any notice of the pride of others.

An accident which touched him nearly still further darkened his humor. One day, as he was amusing himself after dinner, according to his custom, by cracking nuts with his teeth, he broke one of his molars. He had a frightful scene with Joseph about it, and held him responsible for his misfortune. This broken tooth assumed the dimensions of an event in his eyes ; and, when he opened his paper the next morning, he was almost astonished not to find the accident chronicled among the miscellaneous occurrences. From that time forward he often uttered deep sighs, and if any one had had the audacity to say to him, "What is the matter ?" he would have answered : "I am thinking of the molar I have lost, and of my son whom I detest, and I conclude absolutely that I must take a wife." The longer he thought, the more fixed he grew in the resolution he had formed ; he

was anxious to hasten the marriage. Decidedly, it was the only plan which offered itself to him of tasting the pleasures of revenge, and at the same time of getting rid of the ennui which consumed him. A short time afterward M. Crépin sent word that his sister had just arrived at Bourg. He replied instantly: "Bring her to me to-morrow. We will dine together; we will talk; but remember that I bind myself to nothing."

The next day he was busy thinking out the bill of fare for the banquet which he proposed to give for Mlle. Crépin, and preparing in his head, in methodical order, the questions which he intended to put to her, in order to test her good sense and discretion, when Joseph, with his eyes very wide open, came to announce to him that Mlle. de Saligneux was there, and desired to speak to him. His surprise was extreme. "What does that baron's daughter want of me?" he exclaimed. "Send her off." But, immediately thinking better of it, he went to meet her, made her come in, and said to her with ironical politeness, "Mlle. de Saligneux in Têterol's house! What a distinguished honor for the old man!"

She seated herself facing him, and without taking time to recover her breath—

"M. Têterol," said she, "my father and I came from Paris yesterday, and we bring a piece of news which I was anxious to communicate to you—agreeable news, of course."

"Agreeable news, mademoiselle!" he exclaimed. "And you announce it to me?"

"Listen. My father and I have reflected. The result is that your son consents to ask for my hand, I consent to give it to him, and my father consents to our marriage, provided you consent to a reconciliation with the young man, who is hard to get along with, but quick to repent."

M. Têterol looked in her eyes to assure himself that she was speaking seriously. He recovered his amiable gayety of former days, and retorted, as he rubbed his hands :

"Ah ! ah ! so our affairs are in a bad way, and we turn again to the expedient of a misalliance ! What are you thinking of ? Join a Têterol and a Saligneux ! Go tell your father, mademoiselle, that I too have been reflecting, and that this marriage will never have my consent."

"Why ?" she asked.

"Because I have a holy horror of all barons on earth, and of all barons' daughters."

"You calumniate yourself," said she ; "it is not horror with which I inspire you. The first time we saw each other, I perceived that I pleased you."

At these words she leaned toward him, and plunged her dark eyes into the gray eyes of the old man. He felt again the victorious charm, the first effect of which he had felt on the highway. He decided for the second time that Mlle. de Saligneux was not like any one else, that there was something about her. What was it ? The fact is, she forced him to take her into consideration.

"Ta, ta," he replied, resisting the charm, "I have

the honor of repeating to you that there will never be anything between us. I like war : it is a game which suits me ; the more so, as I am sure of winning. Saligneux shall be mine : that was always my idea, and I shall carry out my idea. Do you imagine that your needy father will ever be in a position to discharge his debt ? He has just passed three months in Paris. God knows the life he has led, the money he has spent ! I only need to wait, like a fisherman who has spread his net, and who knows that the salmon will come to it. Don't speak to me of marriage, or treaty, or contract, or peace, or reconciliation, or of my son ! I think more of myself. And look at this hand ; don't you see Saligneux in it ? I am sorry for you, my pretty young lady."

She exclaimed, "Alas for us and our plans ! You are the one to be pitied, my dear monsieur. Saligneux will never be yours."

He replied with a grin, "And I declare that before the end of the year—"

"Neither before nor after," she interposed. "You must know that I am rich now, and to-morrow, if you like, your two hundred and eighteen thousand francs will be repaid."

This remark fell upon him like an enormous stone, which knocked him on the head, flattened him, crushed him. He was almost reduced to nothingness ; but his greatest troubles could not deprive him of the liberty of his mind. His vigorous brain set itself to work ; he guessed whence came the blow which struck him. "So that marquis was sly ?" he murmured.

"You must know also," continued Mlle. de Saligneux, "that, in consequence of arrangements entered into between my father and myself, Saligneux belongs to me. I adore my Saligneux ; I will never yield a clod of it to any one in the world ; you must put on mourning for it. Ah ! M. Têterol, I flatter myself that I have as much will as you have."

Then, removing the glove from her right hand, she offered it to the old man, saying, "Friend or enemy, M. Têterol ?"

He pushed aside the hand. He threw himself back in his chair, as sombre as a prison wall, his face distorted, his head hanging. Henceforth château, barons, all escaped him ; his prey had slipped between his fingers ; the salmon had carried away the weir. It seemed to him that his life was a failure. What should he busy himself about ? What should he think about ? The future seemed empty. He exclaimed : "Cursed marquis !"

Mlle. de Saligneux, who read without difficulty what was going on within him, resumed :

"Ah ! monsieur, if you would be reasonable, if you would renounce your hatred for barons' daughters, how happy everybody would be ? I do not understand agriculture ; I shall need advice, and my father will always be in Paris. And I shall have so many occupations ! We want to be a deputy, and we are going to work this very day for our nomination."

M. Têterol's glance rekindled, but he did not utter a word.

"Believe me," she continued, "and be reasonable.

You dreamed of entering Saligneux as a conqueror ; you will enter it, not as a conquering enemy, but as a friend, if that pleases you. Influence is a finer thing than authority : it does not break down doors ; it has but to utter a word, and the doors open. Influence is the woman, and does not woman govern ? M. Têterol, could you not become a little feminine if you were to try ? ”

He shook his big head and growled. Bears learn to dance ; but to ask Jean Têterol to become a woman ! As well ask an elephant to pass through the eye of a needle.

“ And then, ” said she, “ consider that some day, according to all appearances—eh ! yes, some day some one will come who will inherit the château and the White House, who will possess the two kingdoms, the two empires. If you wish, we will call him Jean after you. ”

He shook his head again ; the future little Têterols did not interest him.

“ I am sure that you will love him, ” she went on, “ he will tame you ; we will teach him to respect you as the founder of the dynasty. Ah ! my dear monsieur, when one has an idea, is it not a great deal to have carried out half of it ? ”

The reasons which she suggested did not affect him much, did not persuade him in the least, and consoled him but little ; but her voice sounded pleasantly in his ears. There was in that voice, as in the whole of Mlle. de Saligneux's person, a mystery which astonished him.

She offered him her hand a second time, saying, "Look at me ; cannot you see in my eyes that I have a heart ? Once more, friend or enemy, M. Têterol ?"

At that he decided to take that little white hand ; he made it dance about in his enormous paw. He drew himself up and looked at this daughter of a baron. Again she seemed charming to him, and his imagination sketched a romance : "Instead of marrying him, why not marry me ? That would be glorious."

This proposition was difficult to put into words ; he gave it up. He had some difficulty in regaining his composure ; he remained dreamy, silent, and morose. Suddenly he said to himself that many things come to pass. Might it not happen that the two Jean Têterols, the one who was sixty years old, and the other who was not born, would be longer lived than any one else, and end by remaining alone, face to face ? Then all would go well, for one of the two could make the other do whatever he wished. He raised his eyes to the ceiling : he saw his idea looking at him ; it was not dead.

He left his chair, pulled the bell, and, Joseph having answered it, he said to him, "Send a dispatch instantly to M. Crépin, to inform him that I shall not be at home this evening !"

Then returning to Mlle. de Saligneux : "He is here ?"

She replied by a motion of her head.

He shrugged his shoulders, and, resuming his post

of vantage, said in a scornful tone, "Just like the men of to-day : they are chicken-hearted ; they know neither how to will nor to work."

"Ah ! how little you know him !" she replied. "We had the hardest kind of work to tear him away from his garret. Do you know, M. Têterol, he is as proud as you are ? Spare him ! When one strikes a blooded horse on the head, he does not allow himself to be bridled. It is your fault, too. You have let some words escape you which lie heavy on his heart ; he had sworn to owe nothing to any one but himself, not even to me, whom, between us, he adores. Take care : if you were to pronounce some unkind word to wound him, he would lay it to me, his ambassador, and some day he might demand an account of it from his wife."

"Let us put an end to this," said M. Têterol, abruptly ; "let him come in."

She rose, approached the window, and waved her handkerchief. A few minutes later a door opened, and Lionel came in, with pale brow and anxious eye, took three steps, then stopped and waited.

M. Têterol was firmly planted on his legs, kept his hands in his pockets, and looked as abrupt, rugged, frowning, inaccessible, impregnable as a bastioned and casemated tower.

"Ah ! the Prince of Wales, the lily man !" said he.

But, as he looked at the handsome young man with his chestnut hair, he felt his paternal heart grow warm

again ; he beat his brains for something tender and agreeable to say to him, and could think of nothing better to do than to open his arms impetuously, crying in an agitated voice :

“Imbecile, you have come back to your proven-der !”

THE END.

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